

LORD STIRLING'S STAND
And Other POEMS

BABCOCK.

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LORD STIRLING'S STAND,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

W. H. BABCOCK.



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DEDICATED

TO MY KIND FRIEND

MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS,

OF NEW YORK,

WHO FIRST ENCOURAGED ME TO TRY MY PEN, AND
WHOSE ADVICE AND INSTRUCTION HAVE
GREATLY AIDED ME.

PREFACE.

THIS volume contains all the poems, which I think worthy of preservation, that I have ever written. Most of them now see the light for the first time, but some have appeared in different periodicals and newspapers. A few of these latter will doubtless be recognized by personal friends; but with such exceptions the entire collection will be new to them as well as to the rest of the public. I have attached to each poem the date when it was written, so that all who may take any interest either in my writings or myself can readily compare the productions of different periods. To complete the record, I may add that my very first verses were written in the autumn of 1861, at the end of a copy of Drake's poem on The American Flag. There were just twelve lines in all, of which I give the final four:

May no rebellion prosper,
And may no secession stand
Before our country's power
And God's own avenging hand.

The others were unmitigated doggerel. In the boyish pieces which begin with the sixth of my list, I have

made very few changes. With this explanation, I leave the volume to the reader, hoping that he or she may derive some pleasure and profit from its perusal, and be moved to good will toward its author. I wish to do some good where I cannot go, and to make some friends whom I may never see. Of course the latter consideration ought to yield to the former where they conflict ; but one would naturally prefer to unite both.

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LORD STIRLING'S STAND.

OVER the swarming river,
With its border of fretted piers,
Mile after mile the city
Its roofs and spires uprears,

But never a shaft or column
To mark the bitter day
When the blood of heroes stained the sod,
Fallen in hopeless fray.

Ah, well ! the tide of progress
Has ever both ebb and flow,
And our gaining has been with losing
Since an hundred years ago.

Yet our losing has been with gaining,
For all these busy hills
Were then but barren woodlands,
With an idle ripple of rills ;

And all the ground below them
Was meadow and creek and marsh,
And over and over beyond them
Were ridges ragged and harsh ;

And, through those ridges, three passes
Were guarded by night and day,
For the army that shielded Manhattan
On the heights of Brooklyn lay.

The watchful trembling city
Crouched on the flats below,
And out on the blue sea-border
Hovered the hawk-like foe.

Thrice in the midnight watches
The bivouac felt a thrill,
A whisper out of the darkness,
A spectral menace of ill ;

But no man sought the phantom,
And no man knew its form,
Till madly the August morning
Rang with a double storm ;

For, while the Hessian columns
Straight at the defile came,
Down on the rear Cornwallis
Swept like a prairie flame.

Then writhed the stricken army,
Wrapped in the coilings fell,
Till the woodland aisles and alleys
Seemed the columned halls of Hell ;

For the smoke of the rapid muskets
Rose in a dismal veil,
And out of the hidden struggle
Came a constant clamor and wail,

Till at last the desperate remnant
A backward pathway cleft
Through the rushing crowds of foemen
That clung to them right and left.

Still by the bay Lord Stirling
Manfully held his own ;
Like a pine-tree grand in a storm-swept land,
He clung to the ground alone.

Three regiments obeyed him
(Three States on their colors shine),
And a single trim battalion,—
The First of the Maryland line.

Firm was the slender column,
Firm as a lance in rest,
For the gallant State had given
Her noblest and her best.

From Dorchester and Arundel
Came the sons of the Puritan,
And Catholics from St. Mary's,
And Churchmen from old Queen Anne ;

Came Calvert and Bowie and Paca,
Goldsborough, Addison,
Tilghman of Chester River,
And Carroll of Carrollton ;

Proud of their lineage stainless,
Proud of their rural sway ;
And the pride of Maryland held its own
With a royal might that day.

Now from the woodland conflict,
Nearer and yet more near,
Broke many a cry of horror
And many a British cheer ;

And Stirling's brow grew anxious
As he turned to the rearward bridge,
And looked in vain for the summons
From the earthwork on the ridge.

In vain, till a mob of flying
Hurried across his gaze,
And, swift on their trail of panic,
The bridge burst into blaze.

Then Stirling sprang to action.
"Back to the works !" cried he ;
"Men of Maryland, hold the crest
And guard the rear with me."

The regiments turned, but lingered,
Doubtful and loth to go ;
He waved them on right lordly,
And wheeled to meet the foe.

And the Maryland lads wheeled with him,
And he spake with a sudden thrill :
"Will you do less than the Yankees?
Give them a Bunker Hill."

And he looked on the summer landscape,
And he looked in the depth of sky ;
"There's little space between hill and marsh,
But there's room enough to die."

Briton and Continental
Halted with startled stare,
For the Maryland battalion
Was facing two armies there.

No need for the hope fanatic
That thrilled the Vendean wars !
No need for Pallas Athene !
No need for mailed Mars !

In the simple pride of manhood
They fronted the regulars then,
To fight till the death for their noble State,
And die like gentlemen.

Grand as the young slaveholders
Who filled the Trachian pass,
And walled with their ringing bucklers
The dead Leonidas !

Four times did Grant, pursuing,
Break on that stubborn crest
As clouds, by the wild wind driven,
Break on the mountain's breast.

Five times on Lord Cornwallis,
Striving to pass the hill,
They dashed like a bursting torrent,
And bore him back to the mill.

But ever their faces, turning,
Sought the remoter shore
And the marsh, all dotted with figures,
Where man never crossed before ;

Where many a heart of valor
In the noisome quagmire sank,
With the mottled pools above him
And the reed-growth rustling rank.

But ever denser and heavier
Grew the foemen's constant press,
And the Maryland men grew weaker
And their numbers less and less.

The balls came plunging through them,
The musketry smote them down ;
Half the battalion were lying
On the hill-side bare and brown.

But still in the scorching sunshine
They fought a hopeless fight,
With naught to aid but their lofty pride
And the consciousness of right.

Suddenly rose o'er the din of foes
A voice like an organ-blast :
" We have won the game through flood and flame !
Our men are over at last !

" Now ! "—and the call was echoed
By a hoarse exultant cry—
" Now show the British yonder
How Maryland men can die ! "

Over the hill they bounded
With a lion-like rush and roar,
The dead and dying behind them,
The flag and Stirling before.

Right at the British heartstrings
So dire a swoop they made
That the mighty mass was severed
Like flesh by a plunging blade.

Outward it rolled and backward
Like a torrent-buffeted tide,
And the rival banners wrestled
For a moment side by side ;

And the rival nobles struggled
For a moment hand to hand,
With lunge and stroke and parry,
And clashing of brand on brand ;

And it seemed for a moment that fortune
Might work a miracle yet,
And yield a grace to the pride of race
And the handful hard beset.

But the severed mass closed on them
Like flesh on a driven spear,
And Grant with his Tories and Scotchmen
Fell savagely on their rear.

As when some frightful chasm
Opens beneath the sea,
The turbid world of waters
Whirls down tumultuously,

Or the waterspout, uprearing,
Grapples the land of storms,
Till earth and heaven are peopled
With a chaos of circling forms,

Down they came, whirling and tossing
And crushing with main and might,
And the Maryland battalion
Had passed from human sight.

When the boats of the ruined army
From the island stole away,
The eyes of hope looked up and down
From river and sky and bay.

But the chieftain's brow was set and sad,
And moist was the chieftain's eye.
And now he turned to the hills behind,
And now to the midnight sky;

For he knew what dew on the sod was shed
In the hush of the summer night,
Where the flower of Maryland bloomed blood-red
Along the southern height.
Yes, the pride of Maryland held its ground
On the grim Gowanus Height.

1876.

BENNINGTON.

A CYCLE was closed and rounded,
A continent lost and won,
When Stark and his men went over
The earthworks at Bennington.

Slowly down from the northward,
Billowing fold on fold,
Whelming the land and crushing,
The glimmering glacier rolled.

Down from the broad St. Lawrence,
Bright with its thousand isles,
Through the Canadian woodlands,
Sweet with the summer smiles,

On over field and fastness,
Village and vantage coigne,
Rolled the resistless legions
Led by the bold Burgoyne.

Roared the craggy ledges
Looming o'er Lake Champlain ;
Red with the blaze of navies
Quivered the land-locked main ;

Soared the Vancour eagle,
Screaming, across the sun ;
Deep dived the loon in terror
Under Lake Horicon.

Panther and hart together
Fled to the wilds afar,
From the flash and the crash of the cannon
And the rush of the southward war.

But at last by the lordly river
The trampling giant swayed,
And his massive arm swung eastward
Like a blindly-plunging blade.

New England felt her bosom
Menaced with deadly blow,
And her minute-men sprang up again
And flew to bar the foe.

But Stark in his Hampshire valley
Watched like a glowering bear,
That hears the cry go sweeping by
Yet stirs not from his lair ;

For on his daring spirit
A wrath lay like a spell,—
The wrath of one rewarded ill
For a great work wrought right well.

Neighbor and friend and brother
Flocked to his side in vain,—
“What, can it be that they long for me
To ruin their cause again ?

“Surely the Northern lights are bright.
Surely the South lies still.
Would they have more?—Lo, I left my sword
On the crest of Bunker Hill.”

But at last from his own New Hampshire
An urgent summons came,
That stirred his heart like the voice of God
From Sinai's walls of flame.

He bowed his head, and he rose aloft ;
Again he grasped the brand,—
“For the cause of man and my native State,
Not for an ingrate land !”

Through the mist-veil faintly struggling,
The rays of the setting sun
Reddened the leafy village
Of white-walled Bennington.

Then out of the dismal weather
Came many a sound of war,—
The straggling shots and the volleys
And the cries, now near now far.

For forms half seen were chasing
The phantom forms that fled ;
And ghostly figures grappled
And spectres fought and bled ;

Till the mist on a sudden settled
And they saw before them fair,
Over a hill to the westward,
An island in the air.

There were tree-trunks and waving branches,
And greensward and flowers below ;
It rose in a dome of verdure
From the mist-waves' watery flow.

A flag from its summit floated
And a circling earthwork grew,
As the arms of the swarming soldiers
At their toil unwonted flew.

"Aha!" cried the Yankee leader,
"So the panther has turned at bay
With his claws of steel and his breath of fire
Behind that wall of clay !

"*Our* steel is in muscle and sinew.
But I know"—and his voice rang free—
"Right well I know we shall strike a blow
That the world will leap to see."

I stood by a blazing city
Till the fires had died away,
Save a flickering light in the ruins
And a fitful gleam on the bay.

But a swarthy cone by the water
Blue-bristled from point to base,
With the breath of demons, bursting
Through the crust of their prison place ;

And another beside it flaunted
A thousand rags of red,
Like the Plague King's dancing banners
On a mound of the swollen dead.

Twin brothers of flame and evil,
In their quivering living light,
They ruled with a frightful beauty
The desolate waste of night.

Thus did the battle mountain
Blazon with flashes dire ;
The leaguered crest responded
In a coronal of fire.

The tough old fowling-pieces
In huddling tumult rang.
Louder the muskets' roaring !
Shriller the rifles' clang !

Hour after hour the turmoil
Gathered and swelled apace,
Till the hill seemed a volcano
Bursting in every place.

Then the lights grew faint and meagre,
Though the hideous noise rolled on ;
And out of a bath of glory
Uprose the noble sun.

It brightened the tossing banner ;
It yellowed the leafy crest ;
It smote on the serried weapons,
On helmet and scarlet breast.

It drove on the mist below them
Where Stark and his foremost stood,
Flashing volley for volley
Into the stubborn wood.

A thousand stalwart figures
Sprang from the gulf profound,
A thousand guns uplifted
Went whirling round and round.

Like some barbarian onslaught
On a lofty Roman hold ;
Like the upward rush of Titans
On Olympian gods of old ;

With the swirl of the wrangling torrents
As they dash on a castle wall ;
With the flame-seas skyward surging
At the mountain demon's call,

Heedless of friend and brother
Stricken to earth below,
The sons of New England bounded
On the breastwork of the foe.

Each stalwart form on the ramparts
Swaying his battered gun
Seemed a vengeful giant, looming
Against the rising sun.

The pond'rous clubs swept crashing
Through the bayonets round their feet
As a woodman's axe-edge crashes
Through branches mailed in sleet,

Shattering head and shoulder,
Splintering arm and thigh,
Hurling the red-coats earthward
Like bolts from an angry sky.

Faster each minute and faster
The yeomen swarm over the wall,
And narrower grows the circle
And thicker the Britons fall ;

Till Baum with his Hessian swordsmen
Swift to the rescue flies,
The frown of the northland on their brows
And the war-light in their eyes.

Back reeled the men of Berkshire,
The mountaineers gave back,
But Stark and his Hampshire yeomen
Flung full across their track.

The stern Teutonic mother
Well might she grandly eye
The prowess dread of her war-swarms red
As they racked the earth and sky.

Like rival wrestling athletes
Grappled the East and West.
With straining thews and staring eyes
They swayed and strove for the royal prize,
A continent's virgin breast.

Till at last as a strong man's wrenching
Shatters a brittle vase,
The lustier arms of the Westland
Shattered the elder race.

Baum and his bravest cohorts
Lay on the trampled sod,
And Stark's strong cry rose clear and high,
"Yield in the name of God!"

Then the sullen Hessians yielded,
Girt by an iron ring,
And down from the summit fluttered
The flag of the British king.

Vainly the tardy Breyman
May strive that height to gain ;
More work for the Hampshire war-clubs !
More room for the Hessian slain !

The giant's arm is severed,
The giant's blood flows free,
And he staggers in the pathway
That leads to the distant sea.

The Berkshire and Hampshire yeomen
With the men of the Hudson join,
And the gathering flood rolls over
The host of the bold Burgoyne.

For a cycle was closed and rounded,
A continent lost and won,
When Stark and his men went over
The earthworks at Bennington.

1877.

N O R M A N.

Room for the song I sing,
Or rather the tale I tell !
For I count it an idle thing
(And I never could warble well),
A pitiful thing and vain,
To call, with our poet train,
The vision one's soul has caught,
The lesson its toil has taught,
Its memories grandly wrought,
A lay or a song or a strain :
The cant of a time outspanned,
That was true in an older land,
But is silly and false, I say ;
For who would dare to stand,
And chant in the face of day,
Ay, or the twilight gray,
His most melodious verse—
The thing that he calls a lay,
Though 'tis something better or worse ?
But never singer of old
When fancies were wrought on air,
Voicing mellow and bold,
With listeners everywhere,
Was haunted by gloried dream

As I by the simple theme
That will have space and to spare.
That mounts from the hidden spring
Of life, in the heart and brain,
And hovers on fitful wing,
And will not vanish again.

It went with me this morn,
As it often has gone before,
When I passed by the temple door
Of Liberty's latest born :
I heard the sounds of yore
In the water's murmurous fall
On the terrace below the hall,
By a million footsteps worn.
Like a dove through the waving corn
A vision before me passed,
Through the trees and the peopled street,
And the upward glancing heat
And the downward furnace blast :
And it comes again, midway
As I sit between crowd and sky,
With the noisy birds on high,
While the wheels below go by,
And the sparrows brown and gray
And martins, sallying out
With furtive rally and rout,
Strive for the petty sway
Of the curled acanthus leaves,
That cap with their carven sheaves
Yon grove which has turned to stone.
And the sounds of a larger strife
Rise from the lower life

Through the ceaseless feverish glare.
And over them all in air,
 Patient and still and lone,
A hawk is hovering there.

It was back in the old, old years
 Which seem so far away,
When the air was heavy with tears
And chilled by the breath of fears
 And fevered with ceaseless fray,
When the gentlest hearts beat time
 To the cry of "blood for blood,"
And the nation's march sublime
Recked little of folly and crime,
Like a drunkard staggering on
Under the angry sun,
 Waist-deep in the gory flood.

The pleasant hills that we knew,
Fringing the southern view,
 Were shorn to a bristling ridge ;
The tramp of marching feet
Echoed in glen and street
 And the long, long reach of bridge.
Where once the tossing corn
Laughed in the eye of morn,
Ugly and dull and worn
 Upreared the grim redoubt.
Instead of the amber ears,
Crowning the wheat-field spears,
 Came bayonets bursting out.
Churches and homes and halls
Were changed to hospitals

Vivid with human pain ;
The college overflowed,
And up and down the road,
And out to left and right,
Scattered its tentlets white,
Scattered its ruby rain.

It is easy to deal with words,
But where are the words to tell
Of the days when thoughts were swords
And man hurled man to Hell?
When death in anger done
Was a theme for the veriest child,
A thing of his every hour?
When he ran to see—and smiled—
As the captive ranks defiled ;
And the hearses passing on
Were a cheap and common show,
And the wounded journeying slow
In the heat of an August sun
Scarce stirred a deeper woe
Than the hurt of a bird or a flower !
The seed that zeal had sown
Was bearing an evil fruit,
For the life of man had grown
Like that of the meanest brute.
The world was at its worst ;
The land was all accurst
In stream and soul and sod :
The fiend had set his print—
No spot but felt the dint—
On the universe of God.

Down in our shallow well,
Our house-strewn, hill-rimmed bowl,
We heard not the bursting shell
Nor the muskets' rattle and roll :
But ever and anon,
From over the northern swell
There came an echoless sound,
Sullen and blank and dull
As the falling of lead on wool,
Or a hammer struck on the ground,
The voice of a distant gun.
Then we knew that a shattered power,
Nearing its dying hour,
Was striking a vengeful blow,
As the prostrate game-cock smites
(Hero of twenty fights !)
The breast of his vaunting foe :
One flash of the keen curved steel
Cuts through the clarion peal,
And the victor is lying low.

We knew that a battered horde,
Brimful of hopes and hates,
Brown as the sunburnt sward,
By valley and gap and ford
Had burst through the mountain gates,
Dashing with arméd hand
At the very life of the land.
And every dull report
Was Early's summons to yield,
Flung from the open field,
Or the answer of clay-built fort.

Ah ! chaos was all astir
In the leaguered, startled town,
As of olden time in her
Who shrank from the mountain's frown—
Flame-shot and sinister—
As the black thick death came down.

One hour of swift eclipse
From eyes and ears and lips
The whole bright world had riven,
And naught remained, beside
The city's turbulent tide,
But the fair forgotten heaven.
Isled in the heart of all
Was the fire-girt capital.

Ay, the sudden summons came
Like a burst of midnight flame,
Or the dread archangel's blast
When the stars shall be downward cast :
But it came not alike to all.
There were faces turned on high
With a happy, thankful cry ;
There were hearts that throbbed and glowed
As the glad blood ebbed and flowed,
Thrilled by that stirring call.

It came like a sea-blown breeze
On a fever-tortured brow,
Or the song of birds and bees
To a spirit that pines in prison ;
For they deemed that the lordly star,
Which had seemed to set but now,

Again from the clouds of war
Had in broader glory risen.
They deemed that the end was near
Of a hated, hostile sway,
And the South that they held so dear
Should again be crownéd queen ;
Through the rush of the coming host
They saw a proud array,
Where empire's mighty ghost
Towered o'er all the scene.

Visions of young and old,
That came and went in a breath !
Visions that lured the bold
From life to the brink of death !

Who can measure the soul
With plummet and rod and line,
And map the chartless shores
Of the world of the human breast,
Outspread the mystic scroll,
Unveil the hidden shrine,
And bring the shadowy ores
To a sure assay and test ?
Let *him* look through the solemn doors
On the things that we call divine,
On the things that the soul abhors,
And say which are worst and best.

Not mine the piercing sight
That can surely read aright
The fiend in angel guise ;
Nor mine the hopeless task
To shatter the inner mask
And open the self-sealed eyes ;

Nor to trace the doubtful bound
Where merit may merge in sin,
Nor to search the shades profound
Of the will that works within.
I hold not a painted flag
My warrant to bless or ban ;
More than the holiest rag
Is a noble deed of man.

I can see my classmate well,
Though, but for what befell,
Why should he stay in sight ?
There was little in form or face,
Of outer or inner grace,
To glow in memory's light.
Only the frank, clear smile
Of a soul that was free from guile,
A bearing not too meek,
And the stalwart limbs and the cheek
Of the hearty Saxon race.
Little of good or bad,
Little to bless or ban ;
No hero that poets paint,
No marvel, and sure no saint ;
Scarcely more than a lad,
Yet thoroughly a man.

What was it that sent him forth,
Some flash of the Southron pride ?
Or the claims of his native earth ?
Or the plea of the weaker side ?
Some silently-reasoned creed
Of the sovereign right of States,
And shame that their cry of need
Still found him within the gates ?

Some stir of the youthful blood?
Some dream of the cavaliers?
Or the tents by the rushing flood,
And the crashing of tourney spears?
Fancy as fancy may,
But only this we know,
That between a day and a day
He passed to the leaguering foe.

Taking his life in his hand,
He sped through the ring of forts,
With their shadowy warders tall,
By bastion and palisade.
As he reached the open land,
He could hear the sharp reports
From the flashes along the wall
Of the random fusillade,
And the tumult of rush and call
That followed his escapade.

But he reached his goal unharmed,
And he fought in the foremost line
Which girdled the forts and town,
When the great hive outward swarmed
With furious buzz and din.
He stood like a forest-pine,
Under the hot sunshine,
Till a bullet struck him down
And the skirmishers brought him in,—
An offering on the shrine
Of zeal, or folly, or sin.

The circling host had fled
Like the legions of the dead

In the misty Norland tale,
Or the grisly forms and wan,
That toss in the tattered van
Of the whirling tropic gale,
As it swoops on the beaten sail,
Leaving the rearward seas
Free to the cloudless breeze
And the clear, warm light of heaven,
And all things happy and fair
Of earth or the upper air
To the world of waters given.
The nightmare dream had passed
And the walls of darkness fell,
And the light streamed in at last,
And we knew that all was well.

The nightmare dream had passed,
But it left its trail behind
On the deeply-venomed soul
And the terror-darkened mind,
That had lately stood aghast
And shaken beyond control.
Ah, fear is a cruel thing !
And over the chairs of state
It folded its evil wing,
And hard by the ruler's gate,
Swollen, it lay in wait,
Crouched for a vengeful spring.

The months went by, went by,
And the clear, cool autumn came,
With its aureole of haze
And its forest-robcs of flame ;

And out in the pleasing weather,
Like a bird of battered feather,
Yet happy in all things fair
And the wine of sky and air,
 The stricken captive came.
Out into the smile of God,
 Out under the frown of hate,
For the evil wings were abroad,
And the stealthy tread on the sod
 Was the tread of the form by the gate.

To the good brass-buttoned souls,
Who live but in order-rolls
And breathe but by word of command
Or the wave of a master's hand,—
Our gallant human machines,
With their clockwork of ends and means
Spring-wound and set and driven
By the gods of their little heaven !—
Our fine automata,
Puppets of martial law,
Coated and strapped and laced,
Belted and bound and braced
In conscience and heart and waist,
Uniformed in and out ;
Who will stifle a freeman's vote,
Or fly at a brother's throat,
Or stamp on a tribe or a State,
To settle all rights in debate,
With never a scruple or doubt,
At the word of a dolt or a knave
The slaves of a slave of a slave !
Our decorous dons of war,

Whose dream of the mission of man
Is to rend like a dog when bidden,
And grieve like a dog when chidden,
And frisk at the smiling lip
Of him who handles the whip,
And scatters the bones and bars
Gewgaws and eagles and stars !
To these good souls, I say,
The lawless freak of the lad
Had seemed like a monstrous thing,
And little with them could weigh
In the scale with that venture mad,
The prison-life dull and sad,
And the wound with its ache and sting.

So they held a conclave wise,
Like owls with their daylight eyes ;
A forum by far too grand
For the simple law of the land ;
A stiff-starched, lordly nest
Of the glorious overdressed,
To consider the weighty matter.
And epaulets glowed and glistened,
And warriors mouthed and listened,
And day after day went by ;
And the end of all the chatter
Was this,—that the lad must die.

Yet sometimes it seemed to me,
Though their hands had signed the decree,
That even *their* well-drilled hearts
Shrank from the thought of taking
That poor young life and waking
Remorse that rarely departs.

Or else, with all their blame
And their outcry over his shame,
Wondrous strange was the faith
Which they placed in the simple truth
Of the hearty, daring youth
In that pass between life and death.

We could see him day by day,
At task or at noontime play,
Silent and calm as of old,
With never a line or a fold
On cheek or forehead or lip,
And only a hidden scar
To tell of his gull-like dip
In the boiling chaos of war,
Or the after-time of pain,
And weakness of body and brain,
Or the swift doom then impending.
And we knew that his faithful word
Was the only human chain
Which held him beneath the sword
Waiting its sure descending.

Think—from the college hill
The woodlands broad and still
Reddened in easy sight ;
And friendly hands were near,
And voices at his ear,
Urging by day and night :
“ They have opened wide the gate,
And their wish is plain to see.
Why should you pause and wait
When their act has set you free ? ”

And again : “ A promise to die
Is a promise no man may keep ;
It is God, not you nor I,
Who should bid our friends to weep.
Self-murder is always sin.”
And he knew that the friendly din
Uttered the silent wish
Of those who were proudest and dearest,—
For how could they see his death ?
And he heard in that *underbreath*,
Always the strongest and clearest,
His father’s promise of aid
Whenever he willed to fly.
And he looked on the purple sky,
And the city clustered below,
And the river’s gleaming flow,
The fields and the tempting wood,—
And he flushed with the mounting blood.
But this was all that he said :
“ I have given my word—to die.”

Yet be sure that life was sweet
In the haze of the dying year,
When the autumn glories meet
With the winter’s wine of cheer,
When the blood is alive and astir,
And the flushing covies whirl
To the thicket along the lea,
And the cry is blithe and clear,
Where over the leaflets sere
The hounds are ranging free.
On the one hand life and light
And the fair sky overbending ;

On the other the solemn night,
And with it his day was blending.
Yet he turned to the shadowed path,
He turned from the things that be,
Calmly, undauntedly,
Waiting the day of his death.

Meanwhile, with every plea
Which terror's mastery
In that direst need could urge,
Parent and friend in vain
Beat again and again,
With the force of a stormy surge,
On the ear of the lord of the land,—
That 'strange hinge-jointed man,
(Since grown to a tutelary saint !)
A compound sure as quaint
As any since time began ;
The man of the gnarled hand,
And the heart that was kind at core,
And the homely mother wit
That probed like a random blade,
With often a sting in it,
And often the heal of a sore ;
And the broad-blown humor arrayed
In all that could lend a jest,
Spoils of the purest and best,
Spoils of the meanest and lowest ;
For his taste was as slow and dull
(Though he worshipped the beautiful)
As the very dullest and slowest.
A crude, unharnessed son
(And truly a noble one)

Of the jagged backwoods clearing,
Where the forces of human life,
With savage nature at strife,
 Toil sturdily on unfearing ;
Yet garnished with odds and ends
Of civilized speech and ways,
 Decorums at random seized,
 To be used when the humor pleased,
And sometimes to make amends,
 In the life of his later days.
Half gentleman, half buffoon,
 Jester and sage and chief,
He came a heaven-sent boon
 'To a throttled land's relief ;
With a will like a mountain wall
 And a zeal that burnt like fire
 Under its odd attire
 Of ape-like grimace and caprice :
And that form so gaunt and tall
 Stalked through to triumphant peace.

Twice in varying moods
 He answered hastily " No !"
 Once with a story brought
From the depths of the Western woods,
 That seemed to the father's thought
 A mockery of his woe ;
And once in a kindly tone
 Urging his duty to all,
 And the evil that might befall
If he thought of but one alone.
But at last as the time drew near,
In a turmoil of utter fear,

Came the last and wildest plea,
And it gained the victory.

For the depths of his heart were stirred ;
And he bade the net unweave,
Almost on the very eve,
And free from the toils of death
The doomed and desolate bird.

And surely his dying breath
On that black Good Friday night,
When the land went wild with fright
And horror in field and town,
As he lay with his bleeding head,
Ere he passed to the realm of the dead,
Staining a player's gown,
Was burdened by no regret
For the life he had deigned to recall
From the gate of the shadowy wall,
On the border of both worlds set.

And for Norman himself—Ah, well !
He passed from the tale I tell :
He is lost in the nameless ranks
Of the heroes who work and die
Under our modern sky,
Winning not praise nor thanks.
But somehow it often seems
That of all the fitful dreams
Which rise from that old, old time,
The one that clings and gleams
Is the theme of this random rhyme.
Eagles and stars go by,
Banners and pennons fly

In your savage pageantry ;
But the foremost place I give
To the calm forgotten youth,
Who stood by the flag of truth,
Who would not lie to live,
And who lived though he did not lie !

1879.

A CHRISTMAS LETTER.

WHEN the moon is broken on the waters,
Rippling, rolling, and flashing into splendor,
How the shadows limned upon her silver
Dance and quiver into forms fantastic !
How the reaper dear to merry childhood
Merges, loses all his olden features,
Other semblance taking every moment !

Often thus, in gazing on the river
Of the nation's thought that hurries seaward,
Fanned by zephyrs, stirred by angry breezes,
Star-bespangled, gloomed by passing cloudlets,
Have I viewed the clear, white disk of Boston
Brightening all the current into glory.
While within the fancy-charming circle
Forms unseen, yet loved for noble doing,
Shifted, changing, like dissolving figures
Cast in darkness on a snowy background.

You have here the first start that was made by my brain,
In a more or less decasyllabical train,

As I waited by Charles for the summons to go—
 Let me finish it here by the Delaware's flow.
 But I give up the metre ; I'm bad at a jig ;
 And I can't dance off-hand in Catullian rig.
 Already I've written some rickety lines,
 Like a broken-back pitchfork with spider-leg tines,
 Or the cabala-marks that my pencil is making,
 'Twixt rumbling and tumbling, and shaking and
 quaking.

Perhaps here and there you can guess what I mean ;
 If you can't, never mind ; it will blossom unseen.

You caught me at echoing once, and forgot ;
 Now, see, I am echoing whether or not.
 Not *echoing*, no ; for the mountain-side sends
 The very same message it gains from its friends ;
 Tone, syllable, emphasis, accent are there ;
 The soul of the sender returns through the air.
 Alas ! but *one* singer can render again
 The choir of the dawning, the song-sparrow's strain.
 Blithe, cheery, delightful, how welcome to all,
 The fine thrill of music that runs through his call !
 Mark the turn of his head ; note his quivering wings ;
 We hear but his voice, but the *whole* of him sings.

Tone, finger, and eye, how they pointed the verse !
 How they sped like a dart, every epithet terse !
 How he captured the seer with a turn of his ee !
 How he brought down the bard with his Quakerish
 "thee" !

How light was his sweep o'er the hallowed sod
 Of "the velvety verse that Evangeline trod" !

As I never before, shall I ever again
See grouped at one board that great quartette of men !
For time will not halt for the pleader that clings,
And the thrush and the sparrow have vanishing wings.
Enough ; to the present the present is given :
We may meet in Valhalla, or Hades, or Heaven.

And now from the Chester this tribute I send
To the man but once seen, whom I may not call friend,
A gift not unmeet for the season of mirth,—
'Tis the sunshine of Maryland drawn from her earth.
You will find in its fragrance the breath of the South,
And the thanks and the praise of her eloquent mouth.
By the Puritan punch-bowl a crystal may stand,
And the North and the South clasp a brotherly hand.

Perhaps, when the festival time has gone by,
With its stirring appeals to the ear or the eye,
By that " oriel " sitting, its subtle perfume
May fill with fresh fancies the gathering gloom.
You may see the wide orchard, a forest made tame,
With its coralline aisles ere they burst into flame ;
How graceful the network of delicate sprigs,
With the fine blush of nature on branches and twigs !
Fair virginal nature, who waits for the day
When the young year shall robe her in bridal array.

It has come ! it has come ! and we lose the rare glow
In hillock on hillock of roseate snow.
The blush is still there, but the bridal-veil spreads
Its thick folds of beauty o'er myriad heads,
As the fleeces of sunset embosom the ray
Last shot from the shaft of the lord of the day.

For each tree is a cloud where the sun and the mist
Have mingled their graces in beautiful tryst,
And far to the westward the eye ranges o'er
A vast sea of love with an emerald shore,
Where the billows melt down to a rose-tinted plain,
And the long wall of woodland puts bounds to the
main.

There the silvery lines of the saplings are seen,
And the first tender leafing of delicate green ;
The pine with its deepening mellow of gold ;
The cedars bronze clumping, outbellying bold.
And deep in their heart, I remember right well,
The warm mossy bowl of a shadowy dell,
Where we found fairy wine-cups and feathery fern,
And round winter-berries that ruby-like burn,
With one who has passed to the isles of the blest,
And the great flush of glory that lulls them to rest.

But I wander. Yet later the midsummer hours
Hang globes of ripe beauty on verdurous bowers ;
Through the leaves, like Hesperides' apples, they peep,
Or the face of an angel just flashing from sleep :
Rich masses of shimmering, varying glow,
All ruddy above and all sunny below,
And the gay, kindly juices that revel within
Will burst at a touch through the delicate skin.

The still — must one drop to the earth from the sky ?
Well, the death is a good one for peaches to die.
Right ruinous now (and our Hawthorne has said
That ruins are needed where poetry's bred),
Where fire and the streamlet the miracle wrought
That turned to crude sweetness that beauty unbought.

The sycamore, giant-like, towers above ;
The birds in the bushes make musical love ;
The rill on the pebbles keeps mystical rhyme ;
The village-bell answers with far-stealing chime
(The one only sound that the world sends us here,
Lest nature than man should to man be more dear) ;
The greenbrier wattles its guardian wall ;
The grape-vines have covered the wreck with their pall ;
Nought now may appeal to the ear or the eye,
Save the beauty of earth and the blue of the sky.

What more? Like a poem, the soul of the peach
Needs time more than toil its perfection to reach ;
One may strain at a task, but the after-touch shows
That only is worthy which ripens and grows.

It has waited and ripened in walls where the rime
Has fallen, like snow-flakes, from magical time,
Where Pope, Swift, and Johnson hold rule on the
shelves,

And colony beauties make eyes at themselves
In mirrors, quaint gilt when the silver was new.
All life's changeless round has been passed in their
view :

Birth, marriage, love, hatred, death, marriage, and
birth,—

The self-same old story of dear mother earth.

Perhaps the Blue Lady has taken a sip,—
The tutelar spectre of Gumbo and Jip,
Who rules in the garret rooms, long given o'er
To spoils of the centuries vanished before ;
In the gleam of the moon by the harpsichord sits,
And frightens the chambermaid out of her wits.

Her fingers dance lightly,—no music will follow,
And her eyes, when she turns them, are soulless and hollow.

It has felt the strong breezes of noble Queen Anne,
Where “Claiborne the traitor” stood firmly for man,
Faced stern and unflinching both Calvert and king,
And taught at the last that the vanquished can sting.
And later, when rang o’er the Chesapeake sand
The summons to arms of a newly-born land,
Here leaped the battalion that rushed on the steel,
And forced at red Brooklyn the Britons to reel,
Hand to hand, breast to breast. Though they sank on
the sod,

They had saved the Right Wing—and they left it to
God.

Yet again, when the sword from its sheath flashing flew,
The men of Queen Anne faced the soldiers in blue;
A quarrel ill-starred between brother and friend;
But they fought by their light and they fought to the
end.

Through the wrath of the storm wrought the will of
the sky.

The palm lies in splinters, the pine towers high.
Alas! the broad frondage is blackened and dead,
The far-scattered fragments are dripping with red.
Right or wrong, wise or foolish, so far as we ken,
The soil of Queen Anne has been fruitful of men.

May it tell of the pictures your pencil should limn,—
The long prairie reaches, the forest aisles dim;
The branches that brawl in the gash-like ravine,
Where the delicate crocus blooms open unseen;

The whispering reedlands that wake in full cry
With the chorus of frogs when the evening is nigh ;
The swan-whitened shallows like quivering snow ;
The far-sailing osprey that gazes below ;
The bittern that flaps down the stream of the dead
Where the network of waters is gleaming like lead ;
The sentinel vultures that quarter the sky,—
Not a feather is stirred, not a motion nor cry ;
Round and round, without effort, they sail as they will,
Their mission is sombre, to watch and be still.

1877.

A MARYLAND HOMESTEAD.

THE sun is bright ; the earth and heavens are gay.
The time is winter, yet the air says May.
Mark yonder hawk that quivers in the sky ;
What placid quaintness dreams beneath his eye !
His post be mine ; a nobler quarry own
And give the nations what is love's alone.

O spot more dear than all the world beside !
O homestead-hamlet where I won my bride !
Where birds sang welcome to my eldest born,
My little Rose—unconscious of the thorn.
Where many an idle summer hour was spent
In the full bliss of unalloyed content.

How well I mind the gentle reader's tone !
The kind companions ! one, alas ! is flown
(Whose life was goodness, written in her face,
Whose soul was music as her breath was grace).

The deep-set window with its squares of glass,
The cumbrous door and oblong knob of brass,
The sideboard's half-seen prophecy of cheer ;
High overhead the swinging chandelier ;
The zephyr couch below the ample stair ;
'The door-framed picture of the open air.

There the dwarfed cedar vainly seemed to strive
In the sharp clasping of the circling drive ;
The green leaves fluttered o'er the sheep-flecked lawn,
Crept the slow wain by clumsy oxen drawn ;
Beyond the fences of the dusty road
The billowy amber of the wheat-field showed ;
The corn, like scythe-blades, sparkled in the sun ;
The fringing woodlands blended into one ;
The light winds fanned me in the ancient hall ;
And the white clouds went sailing over all.

When holy evening settled calm and still
We watched the village brighten on the hill,
As the round sun passed downward to his rest,
And left God's glory in the golden West,—
The great cloud blazing like a sheaf of fire ;
The purple isles' imperial-hued attire ;
The luminous fringe ; the doubtful dash of green ;
The gradual changes of the sinking scene !
Breathless we gazed with awe and strange delight,
Till pomp and glory faded into night.
Surely if e'er the golden walls are riven,
'Tis when the sunset opens into heaven.

Then from some hidden nook serene and chill
Came the clear note of lonesome whippoorwill.

The mocking partridge called us from the hedge,
His pert "Bob White," an olden privilege.
The bull-bats darted past the maple's rim,
Like vampire spirits shrilly voiced and dim.
The shrieking swallows circled line on line
In lessening spirals round their chimney shrine,
Like some wild dervish dance in days of eld
Or witches' sabbath at the midnight held.
As the bright star-eyes opened one by one,
Each weed-tuft answered with its little sun,
Till mounting fire-flies, pulsing in their flight,
Made all the lawn with fairy lanterns bright.

The katydid kept rasping in the elms ;
The screech-owl wailed amid his shadowy realms ;
The frogs' fine chorus from the marshy stream
Came like the voices of a summer dream.
No other sound was heard o'er all the earth,
Save the low murmur or the burst of mirth,
Where old-time portraits in the lamp-light glowed,
And the quaint goblet silver-gleaming showed.

But, hark ! a lustier, jollier peal ascends
From the swart concourse of our humbler friends.
Aunt Ellen's kitchen, may the painter thrive
Who paints that picture as it looked alive !
The much-enduring house-cat and her young ;
The truant dog that lapped with eager tongue ;
The wrangling chickens by the open door ;
The round-eyed baby seated on the floor ;
The wearied farm-hands lolling at their ease ;
The strapping housemaid prone to flirt and tease ;

The queen who owned a turban for a crown,
A stew-pan sceptre and a throne burnt brown ;
The tattered minstrel perched upon the stair,
His head thrown sidewise with a knowing air,
While his deft hands the soft accordion press,
Or wake the home-made flute to happiness.
Blithe race, so poor in all the world can give ;
So passing rich in knowing how to live !

I stand once more in sunshine and the dew
And clasp the mansion in my loving view.
The curtaining leaves just break away before
The jutting porch that screens the ample door,
Flanked by the roses' snow-cups of perfume,
And the crape-myrtle in its crisp pink bloom.
I note the brown walls brought from over sea
Sink, step by step, to greet the Eastern lee,
From triple-storied portliness and pride
To the low kitchen's archway-guarded side.
Old Time has let his scarring crowfeet fall
On every inch of woodwork and of wall.
The sills are dark with sixscore years' decay ;
And the last pillar—see—has fallen away.

A wide gap opens in the robe of moss
That roofs the smoke-house with its yellow gloss.
Its wind-bleached arm the lofty sweep uprears ;
The battered well-curb sparkles in its tears.
The venturous setter crowns with outstretched paw
The long dun hillock of the ice-house straw.
Clasped in the elbow of the bending lane,
The farm-roofs cluster brown with many a stain.

The quarter, lusty corporal in red,
Marshals its awkward squad of frame and shed ;
The tottering stable leans with listening ear
To the bright cottage of the overseer ;
And white-winged legions ever circle nigh
The barn's sharp ridge-pole pointing to the sky.
A home, a village, and a picture too,
The homestead-hamlet dawns upon the view.

Again I lie beneath the willow shade,
And watch the sunshine weave its golden braid.
Above, the hollow buttressed bole expands,
Its massy branches reaching shattered hands,
Where, deeply sunk, thy round-doored homes I see,
Pert pretty wren, our least troglodyte.

The graveyard cedars' century-guarding row,
The flowering cherry with its mound of snow,
The bare-boughed locust where the martins strive,
The bowery alley where the lilacs thrive,
The lightning swallow's purple-flashing coat,
The distant wood-dove's melancholy note,
The faint-heard call of strutting chanticleer,
The day-long chorus of the song-birds dear,—
All, all combine to weave a subtle spell
Of shadowy day-dreams where I love to dwell.

The old colonial days have come again,
Of plenteous cheer and rare good will to men.
Bright forms, long hidden from the light of day,
Float lightly forth in quaintly-garbed array.
Without a sound the phantom footsteps pass
The terraced garden's waste of weeds and grass.

With all the graceful stateliness of yore
They bend to pluck the flowers that bloom no more.
Their merry laughter dies upon the air,
But leaves its sunshine in their beauty rare :
And yonder—as I live—the walnut-tree
Shades a young couple,—lovers? can it be?
Who tell the tale their children's children told
When the soft earth had wrapped them in its fold.

I start,—a thunder-burst,—the dream is gone.
See yonder cloud that rushes grandly on.
Its swollen cheeks are flushed with angry red ;
A cowl of blackness swathes its mighty head ;
The warning, shadow swift before it flies,
Like Satan's herald fleeing from the skies.
Like some lost woman in her wild despair,
The willow tosses high its tangled hair.
A moment more, and all is crash and gloom ;
The judgment glare, the darkness of the tomb ;
While hurrying demons yell amid the blast
Their mad delight in the confusion vast.
Yet my thrilled spirit, swelled beyond its form,
Drains to the lees the vintage of the storm,
Clasps with full hands the glory and the glare,
And with the tempest hurtles through the air.

CHRISTMAS. 1863.

ANOTHER spring has come and gone,
E'en as its flowerets brighten on
 The fields, then fade and die.
Another summer's balmy air,
Another autumn's leafy glare,
 Have left our cheerless sky.

Another year for Time's vast store,
To join the ages gone before,
 The reaper garners in.
And now we reach the natal day
Of Him who gave his life away
 To expiate man's sin.

We reach that day of greatest joy,
Of happiness without alloy,
 Reminding of His love ;
That welcome day to young and old,
Which gives to those of earthly mould
 A joy like that above.

But now o'er all our bleeding land,
From where upon the glistening sand
 The Atlantic flings its spray,
To where the blue Pacific waves
Reverberate through ocean caves
 And mark the close of day,

From cots upon the mountain-side,
From lordly temples built to pride,
 From avenues and fields,
There rises still the same sad wail,
Swelling and deepening every gale,
 Which each bereaved heart yields,

For husband, father, brother, son,
In battle lost or victory won,
 Fallen in Southern land,
To die upon the hard-fought plain,
And with their own heart's blood to stain
 An unfamiliar strand.

How grateful, then, ought we to be
That once again we round us see
 Each well-remembered face !
That death has still our circle spared,
While others, taken unprepared,
 Have gone and left no trace !

WINTER.

Soon shall the snow-flakes flutter through the air,
 Driven by eddying currents to and fro,
In curious spirals round and round career,
And bury deep the grasses' withering spear
 In wild fantastic wreaths of circling snow.

Spring, summer, autumn, all have beauties rare
 To captivate the heart and charm the eye.
 The zephyrs gay that gently fan the air,
 The far-stretched vistas of the woodlands, where
 Impervious foliage veils the burning sky,

The modest flowers that deck the fields and hills,
 The rainbow's arch that spans the ether blue,
 The placid lakes, the gently murmuring rills
 By verdure fringed, the pine's deep tone that fills
 All hearers with repose, the mellow hue

Of the ripe apples hanging from the bough,
 The gorgeous sunset reddening in the West,
 Now gilding the encircling clouds, and now
 Suffusing half the heavens with chastened glow,
 The giant elms that hide the robin's nest.

These graces fair the softer seasons own,
 Each its allotted portion sweetly bright.
 But grander far the wintry forests lone,
 The frozen lake, the frost-king's icy throne,
 And flaming Sirius' distant beam by night.

1863 or 1864.

IMPROMPTU.

THE dirge is swelling deep
 As the lifeless forms depart ;
 Low moans the muffled drum,
 " Farewell to each gallant heart."

There in the car of death
Lie warriors true and brave
As e'er for land and home
Their lives an offering gave.

Thousands have gone before
Struck down by Death's red hand,
Comrades now met once more
In the blessed spirit-land.

In the cause of truth and right
Their heart's best blood was shed ;
For their country and her flag
They are numbered with the dead.

When the day of reckoning comes,
The day of joy, of doom,
When the sea gives up its dead
And the sods release from gloom,

When the towering mountains quake
And the sun is quenched in night,
And the heavens, a mighty scroll,
Retire from Nature's blight,

When the judgment book on high
Its secrets shall unfold,
Their deeds shall be writ on its pages bright
In characters of gold.

MEMORY.

FORTH from the bosom of Elysian hills
The fountain-spring of life its current pours,
Translucent as the living lymph that fills
The fabled basin in Dorado's floors,
Rejuvenating famed in Spanish shores :
And down it rushes in its shining track,
And now it graceful sweeps, now madly roars ;
Until in turbid current foul and slack
It spreads in pools as if to wander back.

As down its current, wider grown and deep,
The wearied traveller on his pathway wends,
Small pleasure from the landscape does he reap,
But finds in marshes black the tide distends,
Where in bewildering maze the prospect blends.
The gloomy cypress waves its dark attire,
The dim-lit vista in obscurance ends,
The *ignis-fatuus* lends its baleful fire
To lure its followers deeper in the mire.

But different far his pleasure-giving fate
Who would toward its fount the streamlet trace,
With step elastic and with eye elate
He views the short-lived bubbles' buoyant race,
And treads amid the flowers its bank that grace,
Where serpent-like it winds its sinuous course ;
And as he wanders on with joyous face
This thought returns, armed with conviction's force,
Life's richest gems lie nearest to its source.

1864.

THE GRAND REVIEW.

BACK from Southern scenes of blood
Came the joyous victors home,
In a blue-clad bannered flood
Pouring through Columbia's Rome,
While the crowd rolled and surged all around.
High the tattered banners wave
Proudly o'er the laurelled brave,
As above the hero's grave,
Sacred ground.

In the dust-cloud overhead
Troops a silent spectral host ;
By the foeman's bullet sped
They have yielded up the ghost,
And the Southern pines wave o'er their tomb.
And the hollow rolling tread
Is the voices of the dead,
Lying cold, unsepulchred,
In the gloom.

Gazing on the moving tide,
All the present fades away,
With its pageant and pride,
Laurels green and banners gay,
And the far future's gates open wide :
And within those portals bright
Glorious visions greet my sight ;
Brothers once again unite,
Side by side.

THE VOICES OF THE WIND.

HEAR the slumbrous summer wind,
Soothing wind.

In its balmy quietude what happiness we find !

How it sighs amid the trees,
In a gentle zephyrous breeze,
Flowing through the Æolian harp
Of the pines that scarcely warp
At its breath !

Bearing to our ears beneath
Still the same monotonous hum,
Like the pheasant's distant drum,
Sounding faintly, faintly through the woodlands sere,
Swelling now, now dying, on the ear.

While through all our senses steals,
Steals a languid drowsy pleasure,
All the bliss of rest and leisure,
Summer's quiet, priceless boon ;
And beneath the sun of noon
Nature lies in silent sleep,
Peaceful, motionless, and deep ;
Save alone the whispering breeze
Crooning softly through the trees ;
Save the sighing, swelling, dying,
Music of the summer breeze.

Hear the storm-foretelling wind,
Warning wind.

What a fearful tale it tells to the mind !

Floating from the storm-cloud's track,
From the devastation black

Of the Storm-King ;
Whispering
Of shattered woods and falling floods
And proud trees bending to the quivering ground.
Scarce a leaf is stirred ;
Scarce a sound is heard,
Save a low, dismal sighing all around,
A saddened, plaintive murmuring
That appeals not to the ear ;
But with curdling sense of fear
(Such as in the depth of night
Fills the spirit with affright,
And breathless awe, and dread
Of visits from the dead)
Appals the heart and clogs the pulses' flow.
While sadly slow,
And laden all with woe,
Floats on the warning wind,
The storm-foretelling wind.

Hear the raging midnight wind,
Raving wind.
How it rouses with its fury soul and mind !
Soughing from the inky sky
With a stormful energy,
Like a far tempestuous sea,
Hurled upon a rocky shore
With a hoarse and awful roar :
Swelling, rising, raving, raging,
Shrieking out its wild despair,
As though the heaven-fallen host,
All the spirits damned and lost,
Were, in maddening career,

Sweeping round the lonely house,
Whirling high the spectral boughs,
Racking with malignant fury earth and air,
Till mind and soul in the weird conflict share,
And all is as a starless sea
Tossing in its agony.
Thus in midnight's solemn hour,
With a spirit-wakening power,
O'er earth and ocean wave
Does the weird night-wind rave.

1865.

SUNSET VISIONS.

ONCE at the hour when pensive Eve
Approached with welcome step and slow,
I viewed the dying sunlight weave
A deep immeasurable glow.

And gazing rapt upon the sight,
It seemed that spread before me lay
A landscape clad in robes of light
And gorgeous as the gates of day.

Huge mountains rose august and high,
Peak piled on peak and range on range,
Outstanding from the molten sky,
While at their feet, in contrast strange,

Broad placid lakes of rosy sheen
Lay 'mid the purple-tinted hills.
Adown the valleys deep and green
Came a far glimpse of sparkling rills.

And through those vales bright rivers flowed
In many a wide, meandering sweep ;
The sunlight o'er them broke and glowed,
And mellowed splendors hushed their sleep.

A holy quiet wrapped it round ;
My soul to stillness like was hushed.
No note it took of things around ;
While from its inmost depths there gushed

The recognizing joy we feel
When long-departed friends are met,
Who once have shared our woe and weal,
And link their memories with us yet.

But now dissolves the fairy sight,
The evanescent trceries fade,
As melt beneath the morning light
The gem-like dew-drops of the glade.

The scene was gone. The glowing hues
From evening's brow had fled away,
But faithful memory oft renews
Remembrance of that heavenly day.

If human souls eternal be,
Eternal, too, must be their powers.
The priceless blooms of memory
Die not the death of earthly flowers.

No gift that in her charge we place
Is lost from memory's guardian care ;
Though oft we fear gone every trace,
They still repose in casket rare.

Until, when least we seek the spring,
The lid flies open and discloses,
Like genii ruled by charmed ring,
The long-sought; long-mourned gems and roses.

Somewhere within its depths must lie
The memories of a former life,
As unseen stars sleep in the sky
Beyond the reach of earthly strife.

God fashioned forth the voiceless clay,
The dwelling of the soul and mind ;
But in the light of heavenly day
The glorious habitants reclined,

Until into the slumbering clod
He breathed His own celestial fire,
And man became the child of God,
The living image of his Sire.

Within the soul's unfathomed clime
There lurks a subtle memory,
Which, far outstretching bounds of time,
Seems grasping at eternity.

And, gazing back upon that sea
Whence all have come, where all return,
That chaos of immensity,
Earth's travellers' starting-point and bourn,

It sometimes seems to catch the roar,
Ascending from abysses vast,
Of billows striking on the shore,
The lifeless shore of centuries past ;

And through the mist that clouds its face
Discerns with more than mortal ken
Shapes indistinct uprise from space
And people all the void again.

1865.

AN AUTUMN STORM.

WHEN the black Storm-King rises in his wrath,
And sweeps o'er earth with devastating path,
Darting his fiery shafts from cloud to cloud,
And in low bass delivering mandates proud,
Ah, then I love to mingle in the scene,
More grandly solemn than its mood serene,
To see the lightning's mad, capricious leap
Cleave the dim mazes of the upper deep,
And hear the thunder rumble loud through heaven
As though celestial hosts had wildly striven,
And their artillery's detonating sound
Had, heaven escaping, filled the void profound.

Mark how the leaves desert the sheltering tree,
And, trembling, fly the danger they foresee.
The sportive swallows quit the airy height
Where late they revelled in the morning light:
In strange gyrations circling madly round,
They barely skim the surface of the ground;
On every side their plaintive twitterings rise
In vain remonstrance to the angry skies,—
Vain, for the Storm-King comes, and to his ear
Are music all the pleading cries of fear.

At his command the waves uprear their heads,
And rivers foam within their channelled beds.
What can he care for puny human woes
At whose command the elements arose!

His sable wings across the heavens are thrown,
From north to south, a wide unbroken zone.
Out from the west his marshalled legions pour;
Like countless sea-waves moving to the shore.
No ray of light along the host appears,
Plays round their heads or glistens on their spears.
Stately and solemn, pitiless and vast,
They sink their presence in the soul at last.

The tempest bursts. The jagged lightning tears
Its way from heaven to earth, and onward bears
Its course. The stricken ether shrinks aghast,
Then sudden closes, with unearthly blast
Of thunder. Then a rattling, rolling roar
Racks the whole air, and rising more and more,
Crash succeeds crash and peal crowds fast on peal,
Until the very skies begin to reel,
And through the wooded hills the awful sound
Re-echoes solemnly; the trembling ground
Hurls it again into the shuddering air.
The storm-stripped trees wave high their branches bare,
Twisted and wrung as in the throes of death,
And thresh the windy chaos underneath.
While the great diapason bellows round
And fills all heaven with mighty crashing sound.

But my rapt soul finds each discordant key
Music divine, a crash of melody,

Mounts on aerial wings through realms of space
And looks the tempest in its awful face,
Guides the swift current of the hurtling blast,
Enthroned on lightning sweeps sublimely past,
And stirs the holy organ-keys of heaven,
Whence deep-toned euphony to earth is given.
For the grand harp—that silent in the soul
Lies when the peaceful zephyrs o'er it roll—
Give forth weird music when the tempest's wing
Sweeps rudely o'er each fluctuating string ;
And Nature in her every changeful form
Has sympathy with man ; but most the storm
Seems in the soul resembling tones to find,
And fill harmoniously the longing mind.
1865.

SNOW - FLAKES.

SOFTLY, softly through the air
Down the snow-flakes flutter,
Down, down,
Down upon the hill-sides bare
And brown.
Over field and over town
Spreads the mantle far and wide,
And upon the feathery tide
We, musing, gaze and think,
And fain would try, but shrink,
Dismayed, from the endeavor
To fix the thoughts that ever
Float with each falling flake
Down to our hearts, and wake
Emotions there which we can never utter.

O'er the dusky sky
 Spread the curtains dun,
From our eyes that veil
 The sun.
Not as in summer they
Swift over heaven's way
 Fly ;
Not as in noonday bright
Shimmer the streamers white,
 High,
But with leaden hue and pale,
Like the countenance whose tale
Is of a sorrow-burdened heart that's breaking.
Like the craven's face,
Where terror hath its place,
Whose very coward soul with fear is quaking
And affright,
Lowers the noonday night,
And the whole canopy of heaven is making
One mass of pallid gloom,
Vague as the shadowy tomb,
 Ghastly and blank
Where whelmed in fold on fold the fainting sunlight
sank.

But beyond the murk
 Of cloudland gray and chill,
Where lurk
 In their caverns still
Darkness and sorrow waiting for their prey,
Lie the bright realms above of the day,
Where the grand solar rays
In a glorious blaze

Drive away,
Into myriad rainbows blending,
By their furious descending,
Every fog sprite dim that dares dispute their sway,
In their consuming love of conquering power ;
While rings each hour
Through the azure empyrean
Loudly their exulting pæan,
Though not to man 'tis given to comprehend their lay.
1865.

THE AMBUSCADE.

GLOOMILY, murkily,
Menacing dread,
Lowers the shroud of dun ;
Gone is the lurid sun ;
Cheerless the waters run,
Pale as the dead.

Solemnly, bodingly
Floweth the tide,
Murmuring a lonely sound,
Heard in the hush around.
Hearken ! from yonder mound
Whippoorwill cried.

Shrilly the katydid
Scream from the trees.
Frogs in the river's edge
Croak to the rustling sedge.
Fearful in bush and hedge
Rustles the breeze.

Softly the voices float,
 Float to the shore ;
Like a forgotten tone,
Waking in midnight lone,
Momently heard and known,
 Lost evermore.

Louder the voices grow
 Out on the deep.
Nearer and yet more nigh
On to their doom they hie,
Nearer and yet more nigh,—
 Long be their sleep.

Leaving the river's bank,
 Groping the road,
Pass they the bushy stream,
Dark as a murderer's dream.
Ghastly its pallid gleam
 Glimmered and flowed.

Thunders a sudden crash
 Close, close at hand ;
Flash thirty guns hard by ;
And, with a horrid cry,
Thirty forms, rising nigh,
 Rush on the band.

One by one there they fell,
 Fell as they stood,
Hemmed by their circling foes,
Slaughtered in deadly close
(Wildly the yells arose),
 Fell in their blood !

One by one fell they all,
 Staining the sod.
There in the nightly hall,
Hard by the woodland wall,
Darkness their only pall,
 Seen but by God.

Peacefully, sunnily,
 Blossom their graves,
Under the willow-stem.
Softly its requiem
Sighs the old stream for them,
 Murmur its waves.

Still is the tale by the
 Cabin-door told.
Grouped in the moonlight they
Speak of red border fray,
Worthy of martial lay,—
 Wild deeds and bold.

Solemnly all the pines
 Wave overhead.
Swaying the rifted boughs,
Sadly the night-wind flows,
Breathing a dirge for those
 Now with the dead.

THE SUNBURST OF ERIN.

FAR from the land of your boyhood's wild pleasure,
Sorrowing exiles, ah, why do you rest ?
Beautiful Erin, your heart's long-lost treasure,
Welcomes her wanderers home to her breast.
Over the sea comes her voice softly flowing,
Wafted by breezes triumphantly blowing,
Telling that soon on her fields shall be glowing
Erin's bright sunburst, the flag of the free.
Erin's bright sunburst, the glorious sunburst,
Erin's bright sunburst, the flag of the free.

What though Britannia's insolent minions
Shout o'er her fall in derision and joy ?
Freedom has furred not her conquering pinions ;
Still lives the spirit that saved Fontenoy.
Still by the cabin is told Limerick's story,
And how on the battlements lurid and gory,
Bright o'er the fray like a meteor's glory,
Shone Erin's sunburst, the flag of the free.
Erin's bright sunburst, the glorious sunburst,
Erin's bright sunburst, the flag of the free.

Hark ! the brave martyrs of conflict and scaffold,
Slain for the cause of your beautiful land,
Exiled O'Connell the ruined and baffled,
Emmet and all of the patriot band,
Summon you o'er the Atlantic's blue water.
Haste as the eagle that scents the red slaughter ;
Fight the old foe as your ancestors fought her ;

Up with the sunburst, the flag of the free.
Erin's bright sunburst, the glorious sunburst,
Erin's bright sunburst, the flag of the free.

Soon the wronged island shall take her proud station,
Freedom's first vanguard on Europe's wide coast ;
Youngest of lands, yet victorious nation,
Humbling proud England's contemptuous boast.
Then shall the star of the ocean be splendid,
And Erin's glad soul, by long thralldom unbended,
Mount in hosannas, her servitude ended,
Round her bright sunburst, the flag of the free.
Erin's bright sunburst, victorious sunburst,
Erin's bright sunburst, the flag of the free.
1866.

S A B B A T H.

How sweetly solemn is the day of rest !
When Nature seems in sympathy to smile
With man, now freed from daily care and toil ;
And her eternal sabbath, to his breast
So oft denied admittance, enters there
And soothes him to her own divine repose.
From yonder spire that o'er the foliage shows
Swells the glad anthem on the sunny air
With a faint, rapturous cadence ; a light breeze
Croons interruptedly through scattered trees
That shade the greensward decked with wild-flowers
rare,
The haunts of butterflies and murmuring bees ;
And Nature in the spring-time fresh and fair
Seems worshipping upon her bended knees.
1866.

THE TEMPLE OF AIR.

(A SUMMER FANCY.)

ABOVE the clouds lies the temple of air,
A dwelling of beauty serene and fair,
Free from the thralldom of gloomy night,
Where an intricate web of living light
Spreads in tremulous splendor round,
And fairies dance on the tangled skein.
With tiny voices and gladsome bound
They exult undisturbed in their airy reign.
A thousand beautiful varied dyes
Brilliantly spread the transparent floor ;
And the sunset's roseate glory lies
In curtaining drapery o'er and o'er.
Far, far below, through the rifted clouds,
The distant visions of earth appear,
Its insect bustle and ant-like crowds,
With alternate impulse of hope or fear.
Above is the dome where the diamond stars
Lie scattered like grain from the sower's hand ;
Its pillars Aurora's golden bars
That in changeful luxuriant splendor stand.
Oft through its mazes the meteor's fire
Flashes and glares down the long columned aisles ;
And the gossamer foam-cloud's evanishing spire
Rises mellow and dim 'mid perennial smiles.

When the ocean in fury is tossing below,
And the fiends of the storm fill the ear with their
cries,
And the darkness that rose from the West sadly slow
Now whelms in black horror the night-burdened
skies,
Then far, far above in the temple of air,
In that dwelling of beauty serenely sweet,
Peace waves to the zephyrs her streaming hair
And the fairies dance with their tinkling feet.
1866.

STANZAS FROM "ERIC."

ADOWN Potomac's stream the vessel glides
Swiftly as arrow from the slackened bow,
Bathes in receding streams her swelling sides,
And cleaves the surface with her foam-washed prow.
Far, far behind the city clusters now,
A shapeless mass all but yon noble dome,
Upon whose snowy slope the sunlight's glow
Dwells brightly, Freedom's temple and her home,
The grander capital of a more powerful Rome.

Lo! yon unsightly shaft, whose corner-stone
Was laid in proud memorial of the man,
The only man whose aims were not his own,
In God's great work a worthy artisan.
His was the sword that glittered o'er the van
In that first conflict which prepared the way
For all that since has followed. He could scan
The clouds that gloomed Columbia's future day,
And woe betide the hour his counsel lost its sway!

Like thine, my country, its foundations were
Laid compact and immovable. The toil
Of busy workmen raised with progress sure,
Though slow, like thine, the grandly graceful pile,
And men looked on with an approving smile :
And all was well. There came at length an hour
When warning's voice was heard not, and the guile
Of railing tongues embroiled the nation's power.
The half-built monument was left the tempest's dower.

Its fate and thine on the same cause depend,
And in the past the same results we see.
His counsel, followed, may avert the end
That menaces thy hard-won liberty.
It stands the index of thy destiny.
When high it towers, a pinnacle of snow,
Spotless shall be thy robes, thy people free ;
When dwarfed and foul the shaft, so thou shalt grow.
Its rise foretells thy power ; its fall thy overthrow.

Within thy compass city old yet young,
Old in thy history yet young in years,
Full many a scene worthy of poet's song,
And suited well to rapture or to tears,
Have I beheld. Before my sight appears
The hurried bustling of an anxious crowd
Down black-draped avenues, each visage wears
A shade of horror, curses deep and loud
Are uttered on the hand before which Lincoln bowed.

Another, and an earlier, scene I view.
Horsemen dash furiously to and fro,
With clattering swords and uniforms of blue,
While sturdily tramping o'er the pavement go

Small bands of infantry, whose columns show
Hues more diverse, though still the blue prevails:
For round about the town encamp the foe,
And doubtfully have swayed the battle's scales.
Around from mouth to mouth fly Rumor's fearful tales.

Again, flags on the roofs are waving high,
And hands from balconies. A solid mass
Of soldiery press on exultingly
Below. As through the myriads they pass
Cheer follows cheer. The line no ending has
In East or West discernible. The blare
Of trumpets and the drum's tremendous bass,
And fife's shrill jubilant music fill the air,
And in soul-stirring concord mingle grandly there.

Thus flew his thought on various errand bent,
Back o'er the trail that leads to days gone by,
Nor noted how the sinking city blent
With the faint hillocks and the fainter sky.
At last it vanished from his straining eye.
Half joyful then, half sad, he turned away;
For the true charms of firm reality
Leaving the mystic frost-work vague and gray,
Which Memory weaves to melt in the warm flush of day.

Right blithe indeed was all the scene around;
On either shore waved Autumn's bannerets,
And the high bluffs the northern view that bound
Were glorious as the sun is when he sets.
Gulls circle; swallows skim; a light breeze frets
The water's sparkling surface; here and there
Sails in the sun show whitely; constant jets

Of spray the active wheels fling in the air—
And Eric's heart in Nature's guileless joy could share

A pillared mansion built in massive form,
Framed in a glare of reddening autumn leaves,
On the round hill-top meeting sun and storm
Midway toward their sources. Fancy weaves,
Old manse, a halo round thee. Here the sheaves
Of that rich harvest which the world has reaped
Grew into golden fulness. 'Neath yon eaves
That mind from point to point progressive leaped,
Then in one mighty rush to fame's first vanguard
sweaped.

Mount Vernon, the world owes a debt to thee
It never can obliterate or repay.
For spots like these, high-towering grand and free,
Free to the eye's far range, the wind's wild play,
Where the thrilled spirit swells beyond its clay,
These are the places meet to fashion souls
That may aspire to more than monarch's sway.
Few such there are: too much the town controls,
Cramps; dwarfs, giving only part. Here Nature *all*
unrolls.

What joyance ruled in yonder spacious halls
When Fairfax's grace presided o'er the board,
O'erlooking from his mansion's new-built walls
Full many a fruitful mile outstretching broad,
And garneries with grain to bursting stored!
A generous life, no doubt, of hearty cheer,
Well suited to the jovial olden lord
Who left his English home to sojourn here,
And still with wine and feast helped round the merry
year.

Few traits there are that so attract our gaze
In all that shows Britannia's real worth
Than this same soulful homely fireside blaze
That flickers still about her dim-grown hearth,
That honest heartiness of joy and mirth
Which made of life one careless holiday,
Enjoyed earth's good while living on the earth,
Nor deemed it sin to frolic and be gay.
Our motherland, dear is she still,—thrice dear away.

Nor is it banished yet from Western shores.
Throughout Virginia's impoverished lands
Still sons of cavaliers keep open doors,
Still welcome tightens in their glowing hands
For all who will be friends: and—glebe or sands—
Whate'er the soil produces theirs shall be.
Are these a people worthy despot's bands?
There still the huntsmen scour across the lea;
There still before the hounds does fearful Reynard flee.

Nor are the colder Northern firesides void
Of all that brightens life and makes it fair.
Fearless and firm and stern in manly pride,
God's noblest handiwork is fashioned there.
The grand old Puritanic mind they share,—
Gloomily grand, like some forbidding tower,
Whose windows scarce admit the outer glare;
Softened by wizard Time's transforming power.
And, given in joy, their hand remains though tempests
lower.

Here, too, in later years a soldier came,
Bowed by a venerable load of years,
A foreigner in nothing but the name,
And welcomed to our land with smiles and tears,

To view the cause he served in doubts and fears
At last, triumphant, take its final stand,
Like Joseph's sheaf among the bending ears,
The shrine of homage from each ancient land,
And destined high o'er all to raise its forehead grand.

Loved Lafayette, thy name has sacred grown,
One of fair Freedom's priceless heritages.
It needs no monumental sculptured stone
To fix its place in all succeeding ages.
And ever when the red sirocco rages,
And all that dignifies our human kind
Seems shrivelled in the blast, and bards and sages,
Statesmen and warriors, shrunk to petty mind,
In thy self-sacrificing soul new hope we find.

New faith in the angelic soul of man ;
New faith in purposes serene and high ;
In that original celestial plan
Of grander power and nobler purity,
Deep as the ocean, lofty as the sky.
A gem half-dimmed within the earthy mine,
Gladdening, with all its flaws, the pitying eye,
That scorns to sneer, and longs to see it shine
In perfect blaze—nor would for worlds that hope resign.

There's something in these mighty fluid masses,
Sleeping 'mid scenes with sylvan beauty rife,
Or roaring madly down the mountain passes,
That bears resemblance to our human life.
Onward the current sweeps unvexed by strife,
Till some huge obstacle bars further way ;
Where jagged rocks divide it like a knife,
Flanked by huge bulwarks pitiless and gray ;
Then roars its awful voice, far flies the scattering spray.

And such a spot I know, and there have wandered,
 Broad bright Potomac, by thy rock-strewn side,
 To watch thy wondrous power—not idly squandered—
 That effort's vast momentum lends thy tide
 Fresh speed through all its course—and have allied
 A little of thy energy to mine,
 Indrawn as from a font ; and, spreading wide
 Above, have viewed thy glassy expanse shine,
 By verdurous islets gemmed, like emeralds round a
 shrine.

And now he views an uninviting scene.
 Acquia's marshes stretch on either hand,
 A broad expanse of water lies between,
 Shallow and turbid, where, decaying, stand
 Long straggling lines of piles, toward the land
 Outstretching ; and the circling hills are bare,
 Bleak, and low-lying. At their chief's command,
 The marshalled waterfowl troop by in air,
 And blackbirds swarm in clouds to gain their reedy
 fare.

* * * * *

Bright Eden-nooks of scarlet fern and weeds
 And parti-colored grasses glancing by,
 Scarce seen ere vanished. Stunted corn succeeds,
 And swampy woodlands race across the eye.
 A constant change without variety !
 An utter quiet undisturbed by sound,
 Save the swift rumble and the jarring cry !
 The dizzy distance wheeling round and round,—
 Lo ! here once more we stand on new-made classic
 ground.

Two fronting ridges leave a vale between,
 Adown whose centre Rappahannock flows,
 Skirting the town. A field, no longer green,
 Slopes thither from the hills. 'Twas here the foes
 Met in that dread December, when uprose
 The starry banner, but to fall again
 Amid the storm-swept ruin. All the woes
 Horror lends strife were there. With mangled men,
 Torn staggering from the ranks, each volley strewed
 the plain.

Marye's curved crest a flaming furnace glowed.
 Around it, o'er it, hung a sulphurous cloud.
 Flames drove, incessant, through, and the whole air
 sowed
 With raging grapeshot. As the billows crowd,
 Storm-driven, against a torrent's mouth, so flowed
 The tide of soldiery toward the hill:
 Though backward borne by the dread stream that
 mowed
 Thousands to earth, yet surging onward still,
 With wild and fierce desire and tumult loud and shrill.

And this is only one of many fields
 Where Death has sown his seed and reaped his grain.
 A plenteous harvest his plantation yields.
 From Appalachia's rugged mountain chain
 To where the rivers mingle with the main
 Virginia's soil is fertilized by gore:
 Each hill, each stream, commemorates the slain.
 Man's monuments lie wrecked on field and shore;
 But those that mark his follies stand for evermore.

* * * * *

Adown a roadway flanked by stately elms,
 Across a garden on the hillock's brow—
 And there behold ; where once his savage realms
 Old Powhatan surveyed, remaineth now
 But yonder stone to mark his overthrow.
 There lay the captive's fated head, and there
 Knelt the chief's daughter by her helpless foe,
 Bright with the spirit's beauty, bright, not fair.
 The ruthless arm upswung stopped powerless in
 air.

Bright gleams the river's expanse, bright the sky
 Stretches in boundless fields of perfect blue.
 How soft yon emerald meadows to the eye !
 How mellow yonder cornfield's golden hue !
 As yonder mock-bird tunes his song anew,
 How all the air with music thrills again !
 Yet not a charm that blossoms on the view
 Can match that glorious vision of the brain,
 Nor earthly music vie with Mercy's heavenly strain.

* * * * *

Success, a worthy god for deathless minds !
 The creature of fortuitous circumstance
 Or others' unrequited toil, which finds
 All finished, saving only to enhance
 (Or mar) what they have done,—to the world's
 glance
 Invisible,—or friendly aiding hand,
 Random endeavor, craft, or crime, perchance.
 A worthy god !—But still this truth shall stand,—
 Than a grand failure earth holds nought more truly
 grand.

And woe to those who pin their faith on praise,
 And strive to catch the bubble ere it burst
 Or fly to other hands! What though the rays
 With matchless splendor captivate at first?
 False is that brightness, fickle and accurst.
 But well for him whose mountain mind can tower
 Above the tumult and despise the thirst,—
 Existing far beyond the present hour:
 A worthier meed shall be that steadfast spirit's dower.

For he that represents a principle,
 And in his strong conviction breasts the shock
 Of all opposing powers of earth and hell,
 Holding *this* firm, though empires reel and rock;
 And men and demons crowd to flee and mock;
 And friends join foemen in malicious schemes;
 When Lethe swallows all the ignoble flock,
 Then round his head celestial radiance gleams;
 And each succeeding age adds more transcendent
 beams.

1866-1867.

ARKADI.

VERDANT are Candia's olives,
 Yellow her fields of corn,
 No vineyards are more fruitful,
 No whiter sheep are shorn,

No land has lovelier vistas,
 No land has clearer skies,
 And far or near on isle or plain
 No happier homes arise.

But now the leafy olives
Are lying all supine,
And crushed and matted on the earth
Is every purple vine,

The flocks have left the fields,
The corn is charred and dry,
The smoke of flaming villages
Rolls black against the sky ;

For Turkish hordes are ranging
The country far and wide,
Nor blade of grass, nor living thing,
Survives that deadly tide.

On, on they moved, and hour by hour
Nearer and nearer came,
And nearer still to Arkadi
Rose each successive flame,

To Arkadi, where Gabriel
Stood lion-like at bay.
He might not seek, yet scorned to shun,
The fury of the fray.

His hair was long and gray ;
His beard was snowy white ;
Beneath his wrinkled brow
His eyes glowed darkly bright ;

His robe of monkish black
Floated about his form,
As the cloudland draperies float around
The spirit of the storm.

Some said he was not reared
To a monk's inglorious ease,
For his majestic tread
Was learned beyond the seas,

Where that commanding form
Had faced the Turk before,
When his arm of might
In the fierce red light
Gleamed purple with Moslem gore.

With him was rugged Zagon,
He of the Thousand Hills :
Ne'er had the conquering Moslem
Drunk of their crystal rills.

He kept, as kept his fathers,
His native mountains free,
Obeyed no mandate but his own,
No law but liberty.

From those blue Sphakiot mountains
Down with his tribe he came,
When first the trampled island
Burst into wrathful flame ;

On Turk and on Egyptian
Waged desultory war,—
In all the land there was not a brand
Had left so many a scar.

There, too, came young Camouilli
Of old Venetian blood.
Ah ! where was his home ancestral
That towered o'er field and flood ?

A mass of smouldering ruin !
The tomb of a murdered sire !—
What wonder his soul was glowing
With a mighty and quenchless ire ?

And Manius of Suda,
A merchant of the town,
Demetrius the Athenian,
And Scharz the blacksmith brown,

And many a sturdy yeoman,
And many a mountaineer,
And many a monk, with cowl and robe
And crucifix, were there.

Then from Mustapha Pacha
The haughty summons came :
No choice he left his foemen
Save only death or shame.

And Gabriel returned him
The answer proud and stern :
“ Whate’er thou hast of Arkadi
Thy red right hand must earn.”

So when the stars shone brightly,
And the winds blew underneath,
All slept the sleep of silence,
But some the sleep of death.

The sun has risen, the circling camps
Are all astir with life,
And on to the assault they move,
On to the deadly strife.

The turbaned mass swept round the hill,
Then, yelling, upward pressed.
Like sparks of fire the bayonets gleamed,
North, South, and East all sunset-streamed,
Like diamonds, at the West.

As from some cavern-like cloud
Leaps the red lightning forth,
Flash upon flash, and here and there
Smites forest-trees to earth :

So from that lofty crest
Down streamed the rapid fire,
And scattered through the ascending ranks
Death and confusion dire.

But thousands upon thousands
Came surging on behind,
And the foremost ranks were borne along
Like clouds before the wind :

They dashed against the whitened walls
Like waves against a rock,
Which, towering high mid stormy seas,
Defies their utmost shock.

They leaped to catch the windows,
But tumbled back in gore ;
They struggled at the loopholes,
They thundered at the door.

But the hard iron-bossed beams
Yielded not to their ire,
And ever fiercer, deadlier grew
The Christians' ceaseless fire.

And thrice the Turks before it
 Wavered and turned and fled,
But rallying half-way down the slope,
 Came trampling o'er the dead.

At last their furious onslaught
 Forced the door open wide,
And through the entrance in they poured
 A mad, exultant tide.

Then all the spacious court-yard
 Was filled with tossing heads,
And arms high waving in the air,
And groan and yell and shriek and cheer
Made such an awful discord there,
That Hell itself, that sound to hear,
Had yielded up each shape of fear
 That wizard knows and dreads.

But still through all the deafening roar
Of musketry rose more and more
 In one grand stormy stream.
For from the casements all around
Shot the red flashes, and the ground
Was strewn with dead. Each ghastly mound
Fresh victims climbed. No entrance found,
 Their bayonets lurid gleam.

Crash go the doors ! and on and on
 They rush from room to room ;
And louder peals each echoing cry
Of rage and pain and agony
 From out the sulphurous gloom.

Zagon has fallen ; never more
His native mountains rising o'er
 The sun shall greet his eyes.
Camouilli by the hero's side,
With death-wounds gaping deep and wide,
 In speechless agony lies.

Thus, reeling back, the Cretans fell
 Before the Moslem throng,
That, like a foaming torrent, swept
 All barriers along.

Yes, as a torrent whirls along
 The slenderest wattled screen
Their desperate foemen on they swept,
And on, still on the Moslem kept ;
They neared the magazine.

But what has checked that furious rush ?
 What dread sight meets their gaze ?
Why blanches every swarthy cheek
 With terror and amaze ?

There in the centre of the room
 Behold Gabriel stand.
His eyes are raised to heaven, and, lo !
 A torch flames in his hand.

A strange high look was on his brow ;
 His eyes unearthly gleamed ;
And every lineament aglow
 With a grand triumph seemed.

Thrice round his head he waved that torch,
Then plunged it at his feet,
And rose to his full height, as though
To give death welcome meet.

A mighty crash shook heaven. The walls
Rose heavily in air,
And mangled limbs and volumed smoke
Mingled in chaos there.

Earth quaked to hear the awful sound,
The forest monarchs swayed.
Far, far around o'er all the plain
Showered the dense volcanic rain,
The Moslem remnant fled amain,
All pallid and dismayed.

Long shall Mustapha Pacha
Bewail his slaughtered men,
For such another gallant host
He ne'er shall lead again.

And where the Balkan torrents
In turbid fury roar,
And where the Nile's dark waters
Sweep onward to the shore,

Where Adrianople's roses
Bloom bright for many a mile,
Where in the East reposes
The Cyprian goddess' isle,

Through all the broad dominions
That own the Sultan's sway,
On land and sea great grief shall be
For the deed done that day.

Well may ye grieve, proud Moslem,
Well may ye weep and wail,
For all through Candia's valleys
Has gone the stirring tale.

The bold feel treble valor,
The wavering are stayed,
The weak grow strong, the sluggards wake
And grasp for martyred Gabriel's sake
The idly-rusting blade.

No more the land of Minos
Your cursed dominion hails ;
Henceforth a home of freedom
Shall greet the Orient gales.

The paradise Levantine,
The godlike heroes' isle,
Set in the wave without a slave,
Once more shall bloom and smile.

Once more united Greece shall be,
First in the van of liberty,
And when of old Thermopylæ
Is told the glorious fray,
With equal rapture shall they dwell
Upon the name of Gabriel,
And with as great a pride shall tell
Of the deed done that day.

THE NIGHT-HAWK.

WHEN evening shades are coming on apace,
And lengthening traceries sway across the ground,
Where phantom branches dimly interlace,
And cool, sad silence reigns o'er all around,
Sad, but not sombre, far less sad than sweet,
The sweet sad silence of departing day,
When swallows, darting down the quiet street,
Twitter and play ;

Then in the dusk I view thy distant form,
Skimming across the darkened fields of air,
Drinking the breath of yonder muttering storm,
Chasing the sunset to its golden lair.
And now full shrilly sounds thy piercing cry,
Far, far beyond the compass of my sight,
Amid the deepening blackness of the sky,
Bird of the night.

Not like the lazy owl that sits and mourns
With dolorous voice the dreary midnight hour,
Or through the woodland flits with cumbrous turns,
And tears the sleeping victims of his power.
Not like the falcon, bold alone in day,
When all is clear and beautiful and bright ;
Through gloom and glory lies thy dauntless way,
Bird of the night.

There's something in my soul akin to thee
That loves the gloaming better than the glare,
And joys to skim the clouds of mystery,
Diving as deep as mortal mind may dare.

And, howsoe'er it be, I love thee well,
And ne'er, unmoved, can view thy airy flight,
Nor hear thy distant voice its triumph tell,
Bird of the night.

1867.

THE UNDERTONE.

WHEN the hills are white with snow
And the woods all brown between,
When the winds have a voice of woe
And the sunlight a frosty sheen,

Up from the river-side,
Up from the lone deep vale,
Where the wintry waters glide
Past the willow-isle's icy trail,

Where yon huge chimneys stand,
Whence the flame-based smoke rolls high,
And the merry sparkles, fanned
By the wind, in tumult fly,

Rises a clash and a clang,
Rises a tumult and roar ;
The song that the Titans sang
Resounds by the river-shore.

But ever and ever swells
An undertone strong and low,
That dwells and dwells and dwells
In one continual flow.

Not with the cheery ring
Of the steel upon the stone,
Not as the sad waves sing
Through boughs despoiled and lone,

But with stern voice yet benign,
Like the swell of a heaving sea,
Its soul breathes into mine
A grander melody.

And deep within my spirit
I catch the self-same tone ;
Through life's long din I hear it
Steadily sounding on.

And I joy in that music grand,
Passionless, earnest, high ;
For I know that a Higher hand
Has attuned that melody.

1867.

JEPHTHAH THE OUTLAW.

THE outlaw's cavern was a lonely place
And wild, deep set within the mountain side ;
Whose rocks, clean-swept by summer torrents, hung,
Toppling, about its mouth, and strewed the vale,
Through which a river glided lazily,
Gleaming through openings in its verdurous bounds.

Upon the sward that sloped below the cave,
Where Syrian date-trees dropped their isles of shade,

Were grouped the habitants of this rude realm :
A hardy, reckless race, of motley garb
And varied arms, and visages that told
Of fiery, vengeful natures, now relaxed
To merriment and ease, as round the jest,
Or tale of danger braved or booty won,
Or darker recital of olden wrongs,
Not unredressed, though unforgotten, passed.

Apart from all the noisy crowd he sat
Where a cool springlet issued from the earth,
Half leaning with his elbow on a stone,
His head upon his hand. His garb, though soiled,
Still showed its former richness, and the gold
Which graced a year ago a city's chief
Still shone in tarnished lustre on his scarf.
A turban torn from off a desert prince
(The work of distant Cashmere's matchless looms)
Rested upon his brow ; and in his belt
A jewelled dagger of Sidonian make
As brightly shone as ere it left the girdle
Of its Philistian master.

Huge in form
And fitted to endure endless fatigue
He seemed ; and in his firm-set mouth and beard
Of wiry iron-gray you well might read
The dauntless resolution of the man
And tireless energy. His massive forehead
Rose clear and high above his well-arched brows,
And the deep branching lines that gathered there
Told of the life-long struggle, and the pride
That could not easily forgive a wrong,
And would not stoop to mean servility.

But in his eyes a dull abiding pain
Seemed to look forth, as though there glowed and
glowed,

Deep in his inmost soul, the thought of all
He might have been: for surely there he felt
The innate stamp and seal of majesty.
But driven forth from native land and friends,
Branded with ignominy not his own
(And a hard bitterness seized on his soul
At the thought), barred all social intercourse,
And, worse than all, ambition's noblest aims,
Was it a wonder that his patriotism
Had turned to direst hatred, and his love
Of all mankind to scorn and wrath, until,
Like Ishmael of old, he only knew
His race as enemies?

Yet in this wild
Unfettered life he had found a kind of joy,
As the freed eagle finds, when from his cage
He soars up proudly to his native heaven.
This and the charm of gratified revenge,
Wherein fierce minds like his take strange delight,
And the great fame, though bad, which he had won
(For far and wide through all the Syrian lands
Were Jephthah's daring deeds of prowess told,
And the tired warders of the caravan
Scarce dared to rest without the city's walls
For fear of that bold robber of the hills),
Had made him oft the merriest of the crew,
And loved the more for mingling with them thus.

This in his earlier years. But as he grew
In age, the romance seemed to leave his life,

And the hard labor and the strife remained.
And he could see the black unblest end,
When those who feared could safely scoff at him,
And those who loved would fain deny his name.
Nor had time failed to bring its load of grief:
Yonder upon the hill-side lay the grave
Of his wife Amra, loveliest of the land,
Who followed him in his sad exodus
Into the desert, shared his hardships there,
Joined in his plans, but checked his cruelty:
And losing whom he had lost half his soul.

No kindred now remained to him save those
Whose ties were burst by long-continued hate,
And one beside, a fair and fragile flower,
Fearless as fair, of soft persuasive voice
And merry mien though gentle: hating wrong,
And loving good for its own holy sake:
Pure-souled as the far mountain lake, whose breast,
Unchanged itself, reflects the changing heaven,—
Nestling the fleecy cloudlet, or the storm
Sublimely painting, or the starry night
In its sweet melancholy rivalling.

1867.

WHITHER ARE WE DRIFTING?

ONCE our course was joyful, full of peace and pleasure.
Lightly blew the breezes, gayly danced the ripples,
Sparkling in the sunlight, flashing out like diamonds,
And the scattered islets slept in emerald beauty.
From the banks beside us flowerets waved their greeting,
Nodding in the zephyrs, breathing perfumed blessings;

And the pines and cedars and the oaks and elm-trees,
Poplars, hollies, laurels, crooned in varied voices
All their glad contentment : like Eolus harpstrings,
Sounding angel music through the halls of slumber.
And the swallow's twitter and the robin's whistle
And the merry mock-bird all conjoined to greet us,
As we speeded onward under the hot sunlight,
Shining down in splendor on our happy progress.
Then our course was joyful.

But through all our pleasure came a nameless terror,
Came a dread of something that we could not fathom,
Creeping in our spirits, rising, swelling, spreading,
Like a distant storm-cloud, spite of all resistance.

O the storm and crashing ! O the raving tempest !
And the streams of lightning heralding the thunder !
And the jagged rock-points, piercing through the piling
Of the foam and frothing ! And the driving spray-
drops !
And the horrid roaring ! And the demon darkness !
And the dreadful rocking, shocking every moment
On some hidden terror !
And the baleful gleaming of the ghastly waters !
Ghastly in their whiteness, awful in their blackness !
O the crash and terror !

Whither are we drifting ?
Far behind, the rapids, roaring, foaming, seething,
Dimly through the moonlight gleam as in a vision,
And the rocks are closing narrowly about them.
Still the tattered raiment of the cloud impinges
O'er our destined foreheads. Still the torrent round us

Whirls and roars and rushes, eddying and sweeping.
And the cliffs beside us, cold, gray, and relentless,
Leave us half in shadow, half in moon and starlight.
We can but go onward. 'Whither are we drifting?

Down the way before us, where the light and shadow
Weirdly shift and mingle, wondrous forms and visions,
Messengers from dreamland, throng upon our gazing.
Beatific glimpses of a world of splendor,
Ocean stretching peaceful far beyond the horizon,
Stately ports and havens, scenes of sylvan beauty.
But through all their pressing, all their constant crowd-
ing,
Dim and spectral figures like the forms of chaos,
Fearful in their vagueness, wave their phantom fingers
In a solemn warning.

Wrecks of ruined nations lie along the borders,
With their tattered pennons flapping sadly, slowly :
Skeleton-like, grimly, shows their wave-washed rib-
work,
Half-submerged and whitened, piteous sight and awful.
And a crowd of voices, mingling in strange jargon,—
Howls and yells and shriekings, shouted cheers and
blessings,
Wild expostulations, stern and earnest warnings,
Strains of sweetest music, peals of demon laughter,—
From the depths before us greet our awe-struck senses.
Whither are we drifting?

1867.

THE AZTEC EMPEROR.

LOFTILY towered the tropic palm ;
Soft flowed the tropic breeze, breathing balm ;
And the few white cloudlets that wandered by
Over the depths of the clear blue sky,
Showed the more plainly its purity.

Bright pinions were flitting from bough to bough ;
And the wood-dove's wooing-note soft and low,
And the harsher tones of the paroquet,
And all of the woodland chorus sweet,
Proclaimed their joy in their little life,
Unvexed by man's bitter and causeless strife.

The curious lizard, with sidelong glance,
Whisked playfully off in the gliding dance
Through the herbage and up the trees ;
And humming-birds hung like jewelled bees
Lovingly over the passion-flowers
That gloried the sides of the woodland bowers,
Where the gladdening sun found way between
The plantain's darkening leafy screen :
All nature was joyous and wild and free,
And man's alone was the misery.

He stood alone and he stood unbound ;
For even his captor's heart had found
A forced respect for his noble birth
And his nobler native kingly worth ;

And added nothing of needless shame
To his life or death to his fate or fame.

Three-and-twenty years had rolled
Over his forehead broad and bold ;
Had lent a grace to his sinewy form,
Buoyant yet hardy for sun or storm.
No courtlier knight had Castile than he—
This flower of Aztec chivalry.

Here in the body, his soul had flown
On the wings of thought to the years ago,
When all his smiling native land
Knew not the grasp of the Spaniard's hand,—
To the happy days when the crown had pressed
His brow, and the purple wrapped his breast,
And a people followed his lightest word,
And the might of a nation drove home his sword.

A brief but sanguine and lurid reign,
Like the meteor's baleful-flashing train,
Lighting the depths of the wintry night
With weird and spiritual light
(Like some vexed demon wildly driven
Across the star-sown waste of heaven),
Then sinking to eternal rest,
Shrouding its secret in its breast,
And leaving nothing to us below,
Save the doubtful shadow of coming woe.

Day by day he had watched the foe
Closing around doomed Mexico.
Day by day he had urged his men
To beat them back to their tents again.

With yells of fury they filled the air,
Dashing aside the Spaniard's spear,
Swarming the bows of the brigantines
As they forced the palisaded lines,
Tearing the rider from off his seat
Down 'mid the charger's trampling feet,
Heedless of suffering and of death,
Cursing their foes with their latest breath,
Counting but one of the men of Spain
Reward for a hundred warriors slain ;
Till the lake was crimsoned with wreathing blood,
And clogged with corpses each causeway stood,
And the gaps that yawned so deep and wide
Scarce made a way for the sluggish tide
That filtered slowly through heaps of dead ;
Then streamed off with its waters dyed doubly red.

Vainly, all vainly Anahuac's sons
Have striven to shield the fated town,
And now they hear the invader's guns
Sound in the suburbs, and crashing down
Comes house after house, and the rising yells
Fill the air with the noise of a thousand hells,—
The howls of the famished, the shrieks of the dying,
The shouts of contestants, the victors, the flying,
The groans of the trampled, in agony lying.
And high above all the incessant wild pounding
Of the great holy war-drum that echoing, sounding,
Broke on the ear with its huge undulations,
Like the voice of archangels alarming the nations.

But alas for the lot of our lovely world !
Though the banner of right, by the weak unfurled,

May flutter awhile in the stormy blast,
When the winds are high and the heavens o'ercast,
Yet, soon or late, it must sink at last.

Patriotism stern and high,
The deathless hate and the will to die,
The fear for the loved ones that conquers fear,
Were all in vain in the contest here.
Where once the garden and villa smiled
Roamed the coyote lean and wild,
And the lordly seat of the Aztec sway
One waste of level ruins lay,
Stretching for miles and miles away ;
And the last of its people, a feeble band,
With lustreless eye and bony hand,
And flagging step and dejected mien,
Took their way from the dismal scene ;
Yet stopped to gaze with a last fond view
On the shattered home that their childhood knew.

Not the low holly, but the oak,
Feels the swift lightning's direful stroke.
And so the avarice and hate
Which laid his country desolate,—
Joined to all shadowy shapes within
That throng the horrid court of sin,
And those of purer origin,
Which sometimes bask in heavenly light
And sometimes sink to double night,—
Had left to his wasted fields the hind
And centred their wrath on the master-mind.

The noisome cell, the slavish toil,
The bed of fire, the seething oil,

Had been by turns his lot to share.
But the fierce pangs of his despair
No outward shape or semblance took
Save the fixed, concentrated look,
Where all the ire of an injured soul
And all the pangs it would fain control
Stream through the deepening eye and show
The inner universal glow.

And now, behold, his captors come,—
No flaunting pennons, no booming drum,—
Stained and battered and sunburnt brown
As the autumn leaves that come circling down !
Their weapons glanced in the sunny light,
And greeted with silvery gleam the sight
From the depth of the shadows' checkered night,
But nought about them, save these, was bright.

A something darkens each veteran brow,
And something hushes their accents now,
For a warrior's worth full well they know,
And valor they prize in friend or foe,
And little they love their part to play
In the vile business of the day.

Sombre and stern and without a sound
They form a circle the captive round,
A fence of bristling, glittering steel.
Afar in the shade of the plantains kneel
Dusky forms to the Sun-God high,
Who glares in anger from the sky,
Or gaze erect upon the scene
With sorrowing yet indignant mien ;

While Tlascalans in laughing groups
Watch, nearer by, the Spanish troops.

But in the inner rank were they
Whose forming was of nobler clay,
And some, in truth, who well might claim
The meed of an undying fame.
The hero of the causeway fight,
Last to flee in the dreadful night
When the heavens above and the earth below
Rang with the yells of the maddened foe,
And Hispania's bravest found a grave
In the dun canal or the lake's dark wave,—
Alvarado the lithe of limb,
Genial in wassail, in combat grim,
Turning aside, leaned on his spear,—
Shame reddened the visage that knew not fear.

Gonzalo beside him looked eagerly on ;
In his dull dark eye a triumph shone.
In his grizzled cheeks and his lowering brow
Gloats pleased revenge, he has kept his vow.
His brother, who fell at Cholula's fray,
Is avenged by an emperor's blood to-day.

Alvarez the priest cared nought for these,
Nor foe to slaughter, nor friend to please.
His mission to bear from land to land
The crucifix that graced his hand.
Well, well for those who received the sign !
For those who refused it, wrath divine.
And what if terrestrial pangs were given
To force on the soul the joys of heaven?

Cannot infinite gain balance finite loss?
Thus reasoned Alvarez, priest of the cross.

But a loftier form stepped slowly in.
Dark was his visage and lined with sin;
Stern of brow, and a changeless eye
That told of eternal constancy;
A man created for good or ill,
But—well or evil—for ruling still;
Caring for nought save his single aim,
Aiming at nothing save power and fame,—
Hernando Cortez—immortal name!

Of old the Prince of the Powers of the Storm
Took the grovelling serpent's form,—
Habitation strange and mean!—
And since then on many a scene,
Unrecognized by mortal sight,
Has fallen his glance's deadly blight.
But never in so dread a guise
Does he meet the seraph's eyes
As when a mighty monarch mind,
Fit to regulate its kind,
Feels the fiery hell-born sway
Mould it like the plastic clay,
And the temple of a god
Is a mocking fiend's abode.

The harsh voice broke, stern, cold, and clear;
Like file on iron it shocked the ear;
And steady, contemplated, slow
Came the terse rhetoric's ready flow.
And from his words and from his air,
And the fixed eyeballs' changeless stare,

You had judged an injured man was he,
Taxing false friend with treachery,
But firm in his authority.

“Gautimozin, I have tried
To wean thee from thy hellish creed,
To teach thee of the One that died,
His mother and our God ; the meed

“They win who serve our holy sire,
Who reigns in lands beyond the seas ;
The endless doom of pain and fire
For those who turn from things like these

“To worship idols. I have spared
Thy life when in my power it lay.
The steel was whet, thy bosom bared ;
I turned the deadly point away.

“(Though a fit recompense thy death
For all thy heinous crimes had been.
For scoffing Him who gave thee breath,
And long rebellion’s blackening sin.)

“Since then each passing day, each hour
Has been a day, an hour, of grace.
Thine have been luxury and power,—
Witness the guards thy steps that grace,—

“Thy own old faithful ones, who serve
Thee now, as when upon the throne.
A worthier master they deserve ;
A worthier master they shall own.

“All, all from me and from my friends !

And what returnest thou for this ?

Foul treachery is thy amends ;

Thy best reward the Judas kiss.

“For this thy guidance led astray

Our footsteps in the pathless wood,

Where, thy false mandates to obey,

Thy warriors wait to shed our blood.

And therefore, Guatimozin, I

Pronounce thy doom—thou must die.”

At the word a low murmur was heard all around ;

’Twas grief, not approval, that freighted that sound.

The chief with a frown gave a fierce look askance,

And the heart of the boldest was awed by that glance.

Then a gesture and word of command.—In a breath

They had seized Guatimozin, to lead to his death.

Of in the time of the summer heat,

When the dust lies thick in the sunny street,

Where gusts from opposing quarters meet,

A shadowy form springs up between,

Cloudlike, ghostlike, dimly seen,

Writhing in their fierce embrace,

Wildly driven from place to place,

Now for a moment left at rest,

Then furiously backward pressed,

Then forward whirling, then to and fro

As the windy furies grow,

Till you scarce can doubt that life

In that swaying form is rife,

And it struggles to complain

Of its terror and its pain,

Reaching out its airy arms
Tremulous with mute alarms.

Such was Guatimozin's soul
As it broke from his noble will's control
At the words of Cortez. Nor even pride
Could hold its own with that stormy tide.
And now he wondered if all that seemed
Were some wild fantasy midnight-dreamed :
Now tingled in every vein to be free,
To strike one blow for liberty
And his wrongs and the wrongs of Mexico
That should lay the tyrant forever low.
His hands were clenched, and his lips were white,
But he would not rail where he could not smite.

And that eye so steady, that voice so cold,
That brow so unabashed and bold,—
Could there lurk a serpent lie
Underneath that brow and eye,
Writhing, twining, there in joy?
And that charge so boldly given
In the face of earth and heaven,—
Could there be upon the earth
Man of merely mortal birth,
Who could make it with such an air
Of truth, if aught save truth were there?

Half doubting thus his own innocence,
In very wonder his frown relents,
And mystery takes the place of ire,
As the vague storm quenches the blazing fire.
But the storm will oft for a moment pause

To gather its force for a mightier crash,
And in the torrent's brief calm the cause
We find of a fury more wild and rash.
The flame declines ere a loftier flash ;
Storm, fire, and soul have the self-same laws.

And so as the jarring voice grew still
There shot through his being a wilder thrill,
As lightning shoots through the heaven's expanse.
And he woke like a dreamer from his trance.
And all his wrongs swept over his soul
In billows of fire beyond control,
Till the blood seemed whirling in every vein ;
The nerves burned, tingling ; the dizzy brain
Swam in an ecstasy of pain,—
Of pain most subtle and refined,—
And the mighty wrath that filled his mind
Swelled up the tortured soul within,
Till the barrier grew more slight and thin
That hides from the prisoned spirit's eye
The secrets of futurity ;
And slighter, thinner, fainter grew,
Till his gaze could pierce it through.
And from his spirit's airy height
The mysteries of wrong and right,
Of retribution and of crime,—
God's laws and balances sublime,—
Lay stretched beneath his sweeping gaze,
As checkered fields and woodland maze
Below yon eagle's distant eye
That circles in the upper sky.
Yet, from his former self estranged,
Changed was his mien, his voice was changed ;

For in that fearful inward storm
His soul had so filled all his form
You seemed but in his beaming face
An angel's lineaments to trace.
And his voice rang out like the liquid swell
That heaves from the soul of the dying bell,
Though his words were distinct as the steady stroke
Of the death-watch in the mouldering oak.

“Hearken, Malinche, hearken ! and know
That the words thou hast uttered shall work to thy woe.
The deeds thou hast done in the pride of thy power—
The smouldering ruins of palace and bower ;
A prosperous people laid low in the dust ;
The sacking of cities ; the breaking of trust—
Shall find their requital, curse answering crime.
The one has been monstrous : the other, sublime
In relentless fulfilment, shall reach through all time
Till the wrongs thou hast wrought have been fully
repaid.

Then, and then only, the curse shall be stayed.

“The land thou hast deluged with blood and with tears
Shall yield nothing better in all coming years.
The discord you sow here your children shall reap ;
In fear shall they labor, distrustfully sleep,
Until, like our own, shall thy dominant race
To a lustier foreign invader give place.

“For thee who so seekest for measureless power,
Thy will thou shalt have for a glittering hour ;
Then, stripped of thy honors and wealth, thou shalt die,
With a weight of despair pressing black on thy eye,

In pain and in poverty, slighted and scorned
By the nation whose glory thy conquest adorned,
And e'en by that monarch who bade thee go forth,
And whose sway thou hast spread o'er the whole Western earth.

“Thy fame shall endure. Yes, if Lucifer's fame,
Coupled with all the unspeakable shame
Of powers, created as blessings to man,
Degraded to serve in a murderous plan ;
A brightness angelic all blackened by sin ;
A voice formed for praise making hideous din ;
The foe of thy Maker, the foe of thy kind !—
If such fame can please thee, such fame thou shalt find.

“The realm that has sent thee shall sink to decay ;
Dim shall her glory grow, powerless her sway ;
From the night that is coming shall brighten no day.

“One judgment more to thy gaze I unfold :
Thrice o'er our heads have the centuries rolled.
Again is a monarch led forth to his death,
While nations stand watching, and hushed is their
breath.

Little by little his empire has passed,
Till the rush of his foemen grew swift as a blast,
Till his stronghold lies buried in ruin and gore,
And Mexico's monarch is monarch no more.”

At the first word they had loosed their hold.
Silent and staring, the rude and bold
Stood, filled with wonder and with awe
By what they heard and what they saw.

A breath, half-gasping, Cortez drew,—
For the voice of truth he felt and knew,—
A shivering, horror-freighted breath,
Then waved them on to the place of death.

Many a year has passed since then,
Fateful to nations and to men ;
Many a year of dark and light,
Many a year of wrong and right ;
Of mirrored wonders strangely veiled ;
Of mirrored glories strangely paled ;
Of priceless guerdons, as ills bewailed ;
Till the nations hushed their breath
At the news of Maximilian's death,
Nor knew that death had been foretold
In the days of old.

1867-1868.

MIDNIGHT.

ALL, all around was desolate and bare.
The fields were tenantless. The woods lay black.
A formless something seemed to fill the air
With spirit-presence. In the cloudy rack
Strange shapes appeared ; majestic and wan
Were some, and some were hideous as Hell.
The buried brook with frightened murmur ran,
Like damned ones muttering what they dare not tell.
The wind came o'er the hill with sullen power,
Hissing through sifted snow and grasses sere.
The spirit of darkness ruled the midnight hour,
The ghastly earth and heavens all sinister.

But in that waste I found one little spot
Where gloom to brightness yielded, and was not.
On swaying branches hung a thousand gems,
Such gems as ne'er to mortal hand were given,
And every snow-wreath gleamed with diadems,
Like Purity encrowned by smiling Heaven.
1868.

THE MYSTIC MESSAGE.

It is not the streamlet's murmur,
Nor the lay of woodland bird,
But a sweeter, subtler music
Than ear has ever heard ;

Like the sound of distant singing
On the dreamy waters lone,
When the queenly moon in heaven
Is silently sailing on.

'Tis Nature's mystic message,
Which prophet, bard, and sage
Have fixed in broken snatches
On the bright immortal page.

Only in broken snatches,
And yet that song sublime
Has rhymed with the birth of planets
And rolled with the rhythm of time,

Forever and ever sounding,
In a grand supernal flow,
With a voice of majestic sweetness
And a faint, faint chord of woe.

Ah, Nature, mother Nature,
Would it were mine to tell
The charm of thy wondrous secret
In the words of thy oracle ;

That dimly, even though dimly,
Thy glory might shine through me,
As the sun through purpling cloudlets
Streams over the happy sea.

Till all my soul should kindle
And glow with thy sacred fire,
And races and ages should gather
To gaze on the splendid pyre !

1868.

A POET'S BURIAL.

PRESS down the fresh and fragrant sod ;
Press gently, for there lies beneath
A heart as fresh and blithe, and Death
Bears Nature's son to Nature's God.

His was a genuine human heart,
Not wholly void of blot and blur ;
A hand aye free to minister
And prompt to take the wronged one's part ;

A voice uplifted for the right
As God had given the right to see ;
A love that clung to liberty
Through gloom and glare of dubious fight.

He was a part of Nature's self,
As are the waves and singing-birds,
The full-voiced pines, the quiet herds,
Or fabled faun or woodland elf.

O mirror of the sun and shower
And rivulet and waterfall,
And that deep thrill that runs through all
Of mingled merriment and power !

And marked you not when, sadly slow,
They laid his body in the earth,—
How dead to pain, how deaf to mirth !—
Creation's sympathetic woe.

Great tear-drops rained from out the skies ;
In deathly shade the landscape lay ;
And all the concave dull and gray
Was resonant with muffled cries,

Like a strong heart's unuttered moan,
That struggles in the heaving breast
Through the long night that brings no rest ;
And winds went by with dismal moan.

And then the thunder requiem pealed
Like an archangel's voice on high ;
Yet seemed its awful monody
To hint some glory unrevealed.

Well, he is gone, and we have lost
One more of God's best gifts to man,
A strong, true soul, whose arch could span
The gulf, by others all uncrossed,

Which severs beauty's world, that rolls
In waves of light on every hand,
From the dull earth whereon we stand,
The voiceless sphere of vulgar souls.

He soothed not with subservient lyre
The lettered leisure of the wise,
Afar from common ears and eyes,
But raised from lower thoughts to higher

The mighty monarch mass of men,—
His instrument the human heart.
Its every chord beneath his art
Thrilled to the full and thrilled again.

Press down the fresh and fragrant sod ;
Press gently, for there lies beneath
A heart as fresh and blithe. In death
Lo ! Nature's son joins Nature's God.

1868.

A WATCHWORD FOR CUBA.

THE waves were gleaming : the sunlight shone
On the Queen of the Antilles,—
On peopled city, savanna lone,
On olden castle with moss o'ergrown,
On palms, whose frondage was idly blown
By the slumb'rous tropic breeze.

O life was lovely and earth was fair
In the blaze of that golden day !
But there breathed a dirge in the sunny air,
A plaintive wailing of woe was there,
Which even the waters seemed to share,
As they sobbed in their heaving play.

To the right old Moro looked grimly down.
The harbor stretched before.
Far to the left lay the clustered town,
Mottled with yellow and blue and brown.
Between, the troops of the Spanish crown
With their captives, lined the shore.

With a firm, 'proud tread and a fearless eye
The martyrs take their stand.
Though the distant dear ones may claim a sigh,
No plea is uttered, no craven cry ;
They feel it is glorious *sø* to die,
To die for a fettered land !

Behind them is drawn the serried line
Of the stern, relentless foe.
Like diamond-sparkles the bayonets shine,
And the banner glows like a thing divine ;
Five times that flag they have laid supine
In disastrous overthrow.

“ Down on your knees ! ” cried the Spanish chief.

“ Kneel down to receive the fire ! ”

There was silence ; none stirred ; in that stillness brief
The rustling smite of the plantain leaf
You well might hear, and the zephyr's grief
And the ripples' gentle choir.

A man stepped forth from the fated crowd.

No tremor was in his tone.

Clear were his accents and full, not loud,

Noble his bearing, his form unbowed ;

His answer, reverent, grand, and proud,—

“I kneel to my God alone.”

The words thrilled forth on the sunny air.

Then the fatal order came.

Along the line broke the lurid glare ;

The smoke rolled outward in wreaths ; and there

Lay Crittenden on the sea-shore bare,

Sacred to deathless fame.

The words sped, thrilling,—a nation's dower ;

There was magic in the tone.

They swelled and deepened from hour to hour,

Till the fruit had grown from the perfect flower,

And Cuba shouted with voice of power,

“I kneel to my God alone !”

1869.

THE BUTTERFLY'S MISTAKE.

ALONG a grassy bank a peacock strode ;

Below him lay a soft and sunny meadow ;

Above him shook the leaflets of the wood ;

And all around was draped in cooling shadow.

Gay plumage decked his smooth and shapely sides ;

His crest with all a rainbow's wealth was glowing ;

And as he moved along with stately strides,

His train with blue-gold orbs seemed overflowing.

Far over brightening hill and shady dale
An idle butterfly his way was winging,
Now loitering by the lilies of the vale,
Now in the fields 'mid drowsy locust-singing.

Each ruddier blossom caught his wandering eye ;
Each sweeter flower-cup lured his wings astraying ;
This way and that the giddy pinions ply,
Heedless of all save silly glee and playing.

At last he viewed the peacock's airy crest
In zephyrs swaying with a tremulous motion,
Like thistle-down that shades the sparrow's nest,
Or light mist rising from a troubled ocean.

"Aha!" thought he, "at last I've found a prize,
A rare rich prize, a wealth of honeyed treasure ;
Such flower as this has never met my eyes."
And down he wavered, all aglow with pleasure.

The peacock glancing, thoughtless, overhead,
Beheld the flake of downward fluttering glory
With splendid wings of gold and blue outspread,
Wondered and pecked—and ended thus my story.

Reader, beware, lest in the vain pursuit
Of every fleeting aim and fickle fancy
The little-pondered act bear bitter fruit
Of danger, hid by heaven's high necromancy.

Beware, there's death within the blossom gay ;
Beware, your touch may cause another's sorrow ;
And he who has the peacock's part to-day
May have the butterfly's before to-morrow.

THE MURDERER'S REPLY.

WITHIN an English court a prisoner stood,
Pale but regardless of the gazing crowd.
His brow was high, his temples sunk and veined ;
His countenance wearied, as with mental toils
And long-borne burdens—more than man should bear.
Thus to his judge with listless mien he spoke :

“ My lord, you ask me what I have to say.
Why *this* : The laws of God and man alike
Read ‘ blood for blood ’ ; and I have taken life :
And therefore in all justice I should die.

“ Yes, ‘ blood for blood,’—three twelvemonths back
or so

Our king—God bless him and forgive his faults—
Was very angry, for the King of France
Had cut some trunks of logwood in Balize.

“ He must have been *quite* angry, for it took
For every tree a bleeding human heart,
A priceless soul sent to its last account,
To pacify his spirit,—yet he reigns.

“ But let that pass. The murdered man and I
Were schoolfellows together ; conned one book,
Slept in one bed, and joined in boyish games.
Was it a wonder that we loved one maid ?

“ Then, as we older grew, our paths diverged,
But not our love for her. *He* had become
A prosperous merchant, of whom all the town
Prophesied well ; and *I*, a pedagogue.

“ My talent—for I had it—was outstripped
In all things by his tact,—in all save one :
For Mary’s love was mine, and we were wed :
And from that hour he was my bitter foe.

“ He grew to be the county’s wealthiest man.
And wealth is power you know. And power may be
Employed to aid or crush. Well, his was used,
Used without stint, to crush and ruin me.

“ So bad grew steadily worse. My livelihood
Went first, and then my good name followed it.
I could not find employment. It was cold,
Bitterly cold, and yet we had no fire.

“ No fire nor food ! One evening as I looked
Upon my shivering, starving wife and child,
I thought : God gave this fruitful earth to man
That all might live ; but he has robbed my share.
Can it be sin to take what is my own ?

“ So thinking, forth upon the road I walked.
He, too, was there ; his fate had brought him there.
Now, as I stand before my God, I meant
Only to take from his full purse the gold
His arts had robbed me of.

“ But God or fate
Would not permit it. At my harsh demand
He drew a pistol, warning me. I closed
And wrenched it from him. Then I shot him dead.
'Twas done in frenzy ; but 'twas done forever.

“ And that, my lord, is all I have to say,
For I am tired of life and long to die.”

THE FIRE-FLY.

'Twas nothing but a light within a hand ;
A prisoned light that gleamed beyond its prison.

Once it was free, and in the cool night air
Disported like a fairy lamp, upborne
By unseen hands and rivalling the stars,
That gazed in paler lustre from on high.

And even now the horny hand grew bright
And almost beautiful beneath its glow,
That shone through clutching fingers, like the face
Of some good angel, for a while condemned
To dwell within a dungeon.

Then I thought

'Twas not the only light that I had seen,
Which should have had the free air's boundless scope.
Pent up within a hand's-breadth. One I knew
(Ay more than one) whose soul was quick with fire,
Eternal, inextinguishable, divine,
Which would have filled the wide earth with its rays
Had it found freedom. Ignorance barred it in,
And strong-armed Circumstance, and the shrinking
shame

Of self-distrust, that preys on noble minds
Rather than on the vulgar.

Every soul

Is as that fire-fly, bright but cabined in.
Some gleam beyond their barriers, and some
Merge with the dull clod that walls them round,

Stifled and crushed, or glimmer on unseen,
Making an inward rapture.

Could the full rays stream out in perfect glare
Then man were the similitude of God ;
The Adam ere he fell ; Deity himself
In miniature reflected.

Nazareth saw
That sight, and Bethlehem, and Bethany,
And Olivet, and old Jerusalem,
And the sad garden of Gethsemane,
And Calvary's sacred mount : for perfect man
Was there in all his glory. Perfect God
Was also there, for God and man were one,—
The mystery of the ages.

1869.

THE CHIEFTAIN OF CAMAGUEY.

O THERE'S many a vista grand and bright
By mountain and plain and sea,
But the loveliest spot that the wide earth owns
Is the valley of Yomoree.

The hills sweep round like a mighty bowl,
And the vale it lies below,
Where the river winds in a silver band
And tufted palm-trees grow.

A thousand feet from the sheer, sheer verge !
A thousand feet of air !
A grisly brink, and a ghastly fall
From the cliff to the valley fair !

In fiery Alvarado's time,
When the Spaniard swept the land,
'Twas here by the brink of the lofty steep
A chieftain took his stand.

His brow was dusk, but his mien was high.
He *could* not be a slave,
To toil in the mines of the pitiless foe
And fill a brutish grave.

With horse and hound come the hireling troop,
With devilish yell and sneer.
"And prithee, friend," quoth a jibing voice,
"What doeth your lordship here?"

"The mountain air is fresh and cool,
But the mines they are dark and damp.
The sunshine is gay, but a dismal thing
Is the dim and flaring lamp."

Then another spoke in a sterner tone :
"Ho, chieftain of Camaguey !
Death or life—be the choice your own.
Our errand is no child's play."

The Spanish speech to the chieftain's ear
Was little but senseless sound ;
But "death or life," he caught the words,
And his heart gave a joyous bound.

For the life that had once so blithesome been
Was a weary weight to bear,
And the sombre shade of his people's doom
Dimmed all the sunny glare.

His power was crushed and his hope was gone ;
Kindred nor land had he.
What wonder he looked on the doom of death
As the guerdon of liberty ?

What thoughts of fire through his spirit whirled
No mortal man may know.
This answer he made in his native tongue,
Syllabled sternly slow :

“ Death or life—would ye grant the choice ?
It never was yours to give.
Lo, death lies here at my very feet,
And ye cannot bid me live.

“ My choice is taken : ’tis death, not life ;
Yet my death, like my life, shall be free.
No hireling hand shall speed my soul.
I have answered,—Yomoree.”*

He turned and leaped in the awful void.
Aghast they looked below,
A whirling form and a headlong rush—
And death had claimed their foe.

A dizzy crowd on the beetling cliff ;
And down in the valley fair
A shapeless mass ’mid the tangled herbs.
A thousand feet of air !

The cliff still bares its rugged front
To the tropic sun and storm.
But a name that shall last till the ages end
Was left by that mangled form.

* The attempt of the Indian chief to say “ I die ” in Spanish.

O there's many a sepulchre grand and proud
By mountain and plain and sea,
But never man had a nobler tomb
Than the valley of Yomoree.

1869.

THE LAND OF SPIRITS.

WHERE is the land of spirits
Whither the loved and blest,
Whither the scorned and hated,
Flee for a time of rest ;
There through a thousand ages
Waiting the Judgment-day,
When the wheat shall be surely winnowed
And the chaff shall be blown away ?

Oft when the noontide shimmer
Mellowed on hill and glade,
Down in the fragrant meadow
Under the orchard shade,
Upward dreamily gazing
Into the cloudless blue,
I have fancied a gleam supernal
Brightened that perfect hue.

Oft when the sun was setting
Deep in the western sky
Visions of golden beauty
Greeted my musing eye,
Visions of regal purple,
Visions supremely fair,
Till it seemed that the happy spirits
Might well have abided there.

Who has not seen the visage,
Furrowed by care and years,
Shadowed by life-long troubles,
Dimmed by a lifetime's tears,
Flash into sudden beauty,
Warm with a heavenly glow?
What if the lost one's fingers
Were smoothing that aged brow?

What if the land of spirits
Be the land we daily tread,
The land of the toiling living
As well as the silent dead?
No, not the dead but the vanished,
Not gone to another sphere,
But watching with ceaseless vigil
Our troubles and triumphs here?

1869.

HASSAN'S VISION.

HASSAN BEN HADAD the wise and grand
Was heir of a royal line.
For him bloomed the beauties of all the land,
For him did her rubies shine.
Yet was he sick of a mystic ill
That baffled human lore and skill.

One morn there met at his palace-gate
An eager, wondering crowd.
As forth he stepped with a mien sedate,
Yet humbled, the people bowed.

“Not so, my worthy friends,” said he ;

“Never more shall you kneel to me.

“You note the change in my face and tone

And marvel to see me so.

Draw near that I may not feel alone,

And hear what has brought me low.

Yet a weight is taken from off my breast,

And life henceforward is blithe and blest.

“Last night, when I laid me down to sleep,

A trouble was in my heart—

A deep, dull pain—and I longed to weep,

But the tears refused to start.

And I felt that none in the world could be

So wretched as I in my luxury.

“Then my thoughts flowed on in a turbid stream

(For never a one was gay),

Until at last in a vision or dream

It ended. Beneath me lay

The earth, fast fading, a tiny ball.

And space was round me,—and that was all :

“Stars and space and a viewless power

That bore me through the air !

At once, as opens a tropic flower,

A glory beyond compare

Beamed dazzlingly on my startled eyes,

And I knew I was nearing Paradise.

“There were gates of jasper and streets of gold

And faces I could not see

For their wondrous splendor,—a thousand-fold

Brighter than suns could be.

And all the air with music rang
As countless thundering voices sang.

“ Then I heard a voice : and it spake to me
From a white and awful throne.
The broad-flung roar of an angry sea,
Or the mountain thunder's tone,
Were faint compared to those words of doom.
Yet a lofty grief touched them all with gloom.

“ ‘ Alone hast thou been in heart and hope,
Alone shalt thou henceforth be
In body, with space for thy boundless scope
Through a blank eternity.
Earth, and heaven shall pass away ;
But alone shalt thou wander forever and aye.’

“ Then forth again I was surely driven
Past the ranks of cherubim,
Past the shining portals of happy heaven,
And out in the shadows dim.
Out in the shadowy land of mist,
Borne by a force I could not resist !

“ World after world as I passed along
Receded from my view.
From some came the chorus of joyous song,
And wails from some,—and I knew,
For the only time in a splendid life,
How to feel for another's bliss or strife.

“ Past happy homes where the loved ones met,
But without the power to stay !
My brow was damp with a horrid sweat,
And I strove in vain to pray

But for a place with my kind once more,
However lowly, however poor !

“ Ah, God ! how lovely it seemed to me,
This life of my fellow-men !
How boundless the depths of my misery !
How I longed to hear again
The kindly tones of a human voice !
Ah, how it makes my heart rejoice !

“ World after world I passed them all
With a burning, mad desire,
And my soul went forth in a dismal call ;
But a laugh responded. Fire
Was close beside me, and hellish glare
And writhing figures,—the damned were there.

“ And one I saw, in his speechless pain,
Turn with pitying eye
To another who strove, but strove in vain,
From a lot more dread to fly.
But I knew no being would weep for me,
And hell seemed heaven to my misery.

“ The very damned were not alone,
But soon they were far behind ;
And forth I swept in the great unknown,
The chaos vast and blind.
One by one sickened the stars and died,
And darkness was round me on every side.

On, on, and on in the formless blank,
The palpable, nameless vast,
Where never a sound arose and sank,—
No, not the archangel's blast !

Where thought ne'er travelled nor seraph trod—
Beyond all save the mind of God !

“ Still, on and on, and a maddened cry
Surged up from my bursting heart.
Well might its awful agony
Have made the seraphs start.
A cry too hopeless to be a prayer !
But the boundless mercy of God was there.”

1869.

THE MINER'S FATE.

HE was a miner, rough and swart of face,
Yet not unseemly featured, frank and brave.
She seemed the flower, that, full of gentle grace,
Sways with each zephyr rippling o'er the wave.

Lovely but wayward !—and a sense of wrong
Had filled with bitterness her girlish heart.
Rash words sprang to her lips,—“ Who cares how long
Before we meet again ?—’tis well we part.”

He turned, yet more in sorrow than in pride ;
Such words from her could only give him pain.
His noble nature could not stoop to chide.
He answered, “ Ellen, we *shall* meet again.”

It might be something in his tone or air
Which filled her soul with vague and dismal dread.
She could not tell, but waited—till a glare
Broke forth at noon, and filled the mine with dead.

For weeks they sought his body. All but him
Were, one by one, drawn forth into the day.
But somewhere in the shadows vague and dim,
Unseen by mortal eye, her Alfred lay.

Full threescore years departed. In the mine
Another shaft was opened. Awestruck there
Stood the rough workmen.* Down the steep incline
They viewed a face of manly beauty rare.

Some subtle chemistry of earth had kept
His form unaltered and his face unmarred.
He lay supine, with matted hair that swept
His brow, and hand uplifted for a guard.

But no one knew him of the crowds that came
To gaze upon his features ; till at last
Approached a tottering, silver-headed dame,
Whose soul seemed wrapped in memories of the past.

Who, looking on him with a joyful cry,—
A cry that told of bitter years of pain,—
Sank down beside him. Lo ! the prophecy
Had come to pass, and they *had* met again.
1869.

THE DEVIL'S HOLE.

THE stream meanders many a mile
By velvet meadow and rustic stile ;
Past cottage gable and village spire
And maids in holiday attire ;
O'er shallow reaches of shining sand,
Where patient cattle lingering stand ;

Pallidly gleaming beneath the moon ;
Glowing like gold in the setting sun.

But under the shade of a shaggy bank
Lieth a hollow dark and dank.
Alders, fringing the other side,
See themselves in the sluggish tide.
Above arises the wooded hill,
Haunt of the owl and whippoorwill.
No eye has pierced to the depths below,
Where stealthy currents come and go ;
But the pool has many a secret dread,
Many a tale of the early dead,
Who, plunging down in its shadows gray,
Returned no more to the light of day ;
Many a shriek and gurgling moan ;
Many a bleached and crumbling bone.

What mysteries more its shadows hold
Never to mortal man were told.
But the stoutest diver shuns the leap,
And the swimmer turns with a wary sweep.
In the glare of noon and the morning gray,
And the mellow flush of the dying day,
It lieth there like a guilty soul,
And rustics call it the " Devil's Hole."

Our life flows gayly and gladly on,
In the summer breeze and the summer sun,
But somewhere under a shaggy bank
Lieth a hollow deep and dank,
Where the eddies wheel in a serpent coil
And the turbid waters ceaseless toil,

Striving to drag their helpless prey
Forever down from the light of day.
Sin and Sorrow and Shame are there,
With baleful visage and demon glare.
Strive, swimmer, strive for thy perilled soul !
None cometh out from the Devil's Hole.

1869.

THE MAID OF GALILEE.

FAIR was the night,—for the sun had set,—
And the hills of Palestine
Stood boldly forth from the western sky,
And the stars had a wondrous sheen.

But something seemed in the fragrant air
Like incense gladly given,
And the holy silence that brooded round
Was the very hush of heaven.

In a cottage home of Nazareth
Stood a maiden young and fair.
White as the foam was her spotless brow,
Ebon her flowing hair.

And God had seen what the eye of man
Might never have power to see,
That in all the earth there was none so pure
As Mary of Galilee.

A sudden tremor filled the air ;
A white and dazzling face
Beamed on her sight ; and the maiden bowed
With an awed and lowly grace.

For she knew that Jehovah's messenger
Had entered her lowly room,
And deep in her soul a rising prayer
Was opening into bloom.

Then the angel spoke,—and his every tone
Was musical as the sea's,—
“Hail, Mary, blessed art thou,” he said,
“Blessed with endless peace ;

“For a glory to thee has been vouchsafed
That never was given before.
Lo ! thou shall bear the Holy One
Foretold in days of yore ;

“And he shall be called the Son of God ;
And Jesus his name shall be ;
And the throne of David shall be his throne
To all eternity.”

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.
His holy will be done,”
Said Mary, and over her face there broke
A glow like the setting sun.

For her soul was full of a holy light,
And she knew that to her was given
A crown eternal, surpassing all
The glories of earth and heaven.

Yea, the seraphs that sing by the spotless throne
Such glory might never see
As God had granted the lowly maid,
Sweet Mary of Galilee.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

Not in the Orient lies it,
Where the destroying sirocco
Scourges the Libyan desert,
Wafting the furnace-hot sand-drifts
Down to the populous rivers,
Whelming them little by little.

Not in the mountains lies it,
The bleak Uralian Mountains,
Always draped in their snow-veils
And half the year frozen all sombre,
Where jagged larches and spruces
Half shade, overhanging, the cavernous
Glens, that re-echo the wolf's howl,
Long-drawn note of lamentation.

No, it lies far away in the grass-sea,
The rolling prairie sparse timbered,
The wonderful land, never wholly
Reclaimed from Nature's dominion,
And plunged, while yet in the shaping
Of Husbandry's magical fingers,
Into the caldron of Moloch,
The fearful war of the border.

See, my friend, it is sunset,
Aye and after, for yonder
Far adown in the west there,
Behind the waves of the prairie,

Rises a cone of brightness,
Or rather, a semicircle.
A while ago it was glorious,
Rich with imperial beauty ;
And even now it tinges,
With faint hues and ever changing,
The straggling edges of cloudland
That dip in its dimming radiance,—
A radiance that would be lurid,
But it has grown too feeble,
And seems like a prophet fast dying,
Who, seeing a blood-red future,
Lacks but the power of translating
The evil truth of his vision.

Overhead rides the sickly
Moon that lightens Gehenna,
Flooding the wavering landscape
With a mist-gleam almost infernal ;
Such changes it works upon objects,
Making them larger and vaguer,
And filling with life and with spirit.
While a few light handfuls of cloud-fleece
Float about and before her,
Veiling her countenance ghastly,
That peereth forth through the openings,
Like a fiend through a tattered grave-cloth,
Playing as children with children,
In bitter and cruel mockery.

Behind on the road we have travelled,
Far, far behind, where a dwelling
Is, or should be, there is only

A light newly lighted, that broadens
And seems to promise a welcome.
So softly effulgent is it
One almost might deem the warm-hearted
Settler's own hospitable spirit
Beamed out to us over the prairie ;
Luring us back into safety,
Back from the terror before us,
The Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Far ahead on the horizon
Glimmer and glower at intervals
(Glower like a dawn ill-fated)
The lurid fires of the prairie.
Some, the more distant, seem only
Like an unchanging aurora,
A fallen aurora, resembling
Its heavenly kin as a demon
Resembles a glorious angel,
And bound to the earth for a penance.
Some, nearer, seem only like hell-fires
Rising all smoke-stained and ruddy,
And flaring their insolent menace
Into the vastness of heaven.

Nearer yet than the hell-fires,
Wave after wave, rolling inward,
Of prairie brown and grass-covered,
Leads to the last of the hill-sides,
Sloping steeply toward us.
Not bare is this nor treeless,
But never a leaf in the moonlight
Glistens, for all have been girdled.

There they stand, and among them
Rots a once tenanted cabin,
Tenantless now and lifeless.
The logs of the corn-crib have tumbled,
The stable is lying all shapeless,
A mass of straw and of brushwood.
The door has fallen from its hinges ;
The mud that plastered the crannies
Has dropped, leaving windows where windows
Were never before, and the roofwork
In places is half battered inward.
Where, ah ! where are the owners ?
Who can answer the question ?

Hark ! from over the hill-side,
Borne on the rustling night-wind,
Comes the reply mysterious,
Curdling the blood and chilling ;
And, keeping time to a requiem,
Unheard yet felt, all the branches,
Bare as the arms of a skeleton,
Upward wave and downward,
Forward wave with vehemence,
Ever saying, distinctly
As aught inanimate *can* say,
“ Back ! back ! here Death reigneth.
Death, the mystical monarch.
Death, the ruler of shadows.
Back from the valley of the shadow,
The Valley of the Shadow of Death ! ”

Up from the gulf there riseth,
Yea, from but just beneath us,

The fearsome chorus nocturnal.
The katydid and cicada
Vie with their shrill-toned voices ;
The one in the shadowy tree-tops,
The other among the lush grass-blades,
Sounds all unearthly at night-time.
The white owl, too, with his dolorous
Great tones, breaks forth in a startling
Wail of discordant horror,
Striking the sensitive ear-drum
With a jar that makes one shudder.
The frogs, too, down by the water
Join in a varied concert,
From the deep-mouthed bawl of the blood-noun
To the slender note of the tree-toad,
And the thin, fine, tremulous music
That sounds like the song of an insect,
Varied but awfully lonesome
At night-time out on the prairie.
Over them all sings the whippoorwill,
Bird of ceaseless complaining,
Which has but one note, and that only
A note of lamentation ;
Stealing forth in the gloaming,
Close to the ground like a grave-ghost,
Sighing his woes in the darkness.
“ Whippoorwill, whippoorwill, whip, whip,”—
A score overslough one another
In a flood of unnatural music.

Here on the breezy uplands
We have but the field-lark's whistle,
The “ Bob White ” call of the partridge,

The cry of rejoicing night-hawks,—
Pleasant sounds only and cheering.
We are going out of all blitheness,
Out of all joyous existence,
Into the sombre chorus,
Into the shadowy valley,
The Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Down in that gulf chaotic,
Down in that nightmare mingling,
What forms unknown to creation,
What ghastly visions infernal,
Await our approach, but to vanish
And come again, and surround us,
Fleeting, but ever thickening,
Thickening, growing more hideous,
Nearing, and nearing, and nearing,
Until, overwhelmed and abysmed,
We sink whither man may not follow.

So the thick coming fancies
Gather, as we go downward,
Steadily, steadily downward,
Downward with pale resolution,
Into the sombre chorus,
Into the shadowy valley.

A T R E S T.

STEADILY, silently sweeping on
Overhead in the azure sky,
Massy white in the August sun,
Freighted full as an argosy,
Changeless and mystical cloudlets three,
What are ye bearing away from me?

Lying here in the prairie grass,
Kissed by zephyr and spray and stem,
Light and shadow above me pass ;
Minutes and hours they pass with them.
Steadily, silently out to sea
Ye are bearing my lifetime away from me.

There was a spirit that loved me well,
A face of beauty, a form how dear !
But slowly passes the golden spell,
And ever dimmer the charms appear.
Why, ah ! why, should ye bear to sea
The love that has brightened all life to me?

Visions I had in the days gone by
Brighter than ever on earth were known,
Aspirations supremely high,
Hopes, bright budded, that ne'er were blown.
Mine, I said, shall be wealth and fame,
Wreath of laurel and heart of flame.

Mine to strive for the weal of man,
Mine to labor and live and learn !
Ah, 'twas regal that boyish plan !
But now I scarcely can even yearn.

Why should I struggle with destiny?
Bear ye my visions away from me.

Slowly but surely the sultry glare
Drains the life-blood from out the earth.
I have only a man's poor share;
Take the tribute for what 'tis worth.
Yet fain would I stay ye, for well I see
Ye are bearing my spirit away from me.

Ah, 'tis pity to see them go,—
Life, hope, spirit, and all depart!
And half in dreaming I seem to know
There's something fearful about your art.
Yet why should I struggle with destiny?
The best of things is to breathe and be.

1870.

THE MURMUR OF WAR.

OVER the land where the roses lie
Warm in the sunny gush;
Over the ocean where wave and sky
Melt in the morning flush;
Over prairie and dale and hill,
Meadow and mountain-side,
Cometh a murmur faint and shrill,
That stirs the blood with a mighty thrill,
Like the swell of a heaving tide.

It tells of a throne that is toppling down
With its weight of evil deeds,
Of a tyrant struggling to save his crown,
And a million widows' weeds.

Of a breath that has filled the peaceful world
With legions of arméd men,
Of martial music, and flags unfurled,
And countless cohorts together hurled,
And many a corpse-lined glen.

More than this in its mystic tone
We lack the power to trace,
But we peer and strain in the shadows lone
That shroud the future's face.
And one proclaims, "'Tis the mighty blast
Of Armageddon abroad :
The days draw nigh when creation vast
Shall melt and vanish, to be recast
Pure by the hand of God."

And another cries, "Lo ! the time is near
When man shall be truly free,
When rulers shall yield in helpless fear,
And nations shall cease to be,
And the mighty human brotherhood
Shall govern the earth alone."
We only know that the word holds good
That growth, once started, is ne'er withstood,
That the wrong is a temple of gilded wood,
And the right is a granite throne.

1870.

DAY - DREAMS.

“Our life is twofold.”—BYRON.

WELL has said that wondrous prince of folly,
Soul of midnight stored with lightning gleams,
Sage despite his fancied melancholy,
That “our life is twofold,” work and dreams.

Not alone in midnight’s weird expansion,
When the outer senses sink to rest,
Fancy welcomes to her magic mansion,—
No, she bids us to be always blest.

Hovering o’er us like an angel’s pinions,
Leads she on to realms before unknown,
Changeful vistas, unexplored dominions,
Full of beauty brightening every zone.

O how oft when wandering, worn and weary,
Over prairies stretching without end
In the glaring sun, or threading dreary
Woodland solitudes where shadows blend,

I have joyed to steal from all around me,
All the tangible and blank and dull,
Breaking every sordid chain that bound me,
Living only in the beautiful !

Earth and heaven with wondrous shapes were peopled ;
Future past and present all were there ;
Lovely nooks and cities many-steepled,
Glorious landscapes stretching broad and fair.

Faces brighter than the earth beholdeth,
Eyes that vied in lustre with the stars;
Ancient heroes that the tomb enfoldeth,
Scenes of luxury and stirring wars.

These and many another scene entrancing
Beamed upon my desert-wearied eyes.
Ever on and on before me dancing,
Like a transient gleam from Paradise.

1870.

C U B A.

Up from the south comes a wail of woe,
Up from the golden strand,
Up from the isle where the blossoms glow
Gorgeous as Eden-land.
Full is the hour of a fervent power,
Stern grow the spirits gay.
But there rises a wail, for her sons are dead,
And the star that soared from the ocean-bed,
For the fourth time whelmed in a sea blood-red,
Struggles with feeble ray.

Proudly the palm-tree of Bolivar
Sank at the earliest blow;
Sped the Black Eagle unchecked and far,
Till struck by an ambushed foe;
And Lopez' fate, like a ship of state,
Swept to a grander doom.
Say, men who hold the awful key
To the weal or woe of her destiny,
Say, shall Cuba's last struggle be
Wrapped like the rest in gloom?

The curse that has laid our land in waste
 Blackens her bosom still.
The cup Columbia did but taste,
 Cuba has drained of ill.
We know full well what a very hell
 The Spanish rule must be.
But lust of gold draws our eyes away ;
And the tyrant's squadrons may go or stay ;
And Cuba must fight as fight she may,—
 For little indeed care we.

O for a land that could boast a rule
 Of principle, not of gold !
O for the sway of a brainless fool
 Who' could not be bought and sold !
O that the truth of our nation's youth
 Might flush in her matron veins !
For there was a time when we dared do right
In the sight of man and in God's own sight,
And valued our mission, grand and bright,
 More than our paltry gains.

1870.

THE BANNERS OF THE ISLE.

CURSE it and crush it and blast it forever !
 Down with the ensign of tyrannous Spain !
Up with the beacon of Freedom's endeavor !
 Up with the flag of free Cuba again !
 Banneret starry-gemmed,
 What though thy course be stemmed ?

Ne'er shall the foeman exult in thy fall,
 Driven to mountain rock,
 Rent by the battle shock,
Yara's bright flag, thou shalt conquer them all.

Banner all sacred, the hands that unfold thee
 Blazon the emblem of God to the air.
Forth from the mountains he giveth to hold thee,
 Forth in thy glory defiantly flare.
 Thence in thy wrath to leap
 Down with a whirlwind sweep,
Down through savanna and desolate vale,
 Down to the city's walls,
 Down to Belshazzar's halls,
Demons may strive, but the right shall prevail.

Demons? Ah, yes; lo! a myriad voices
 Start into being and echo the word.
Hark, in his work how the hireling rejoices,
 Lust in his heart and disgrace on his sword.
 These are the deeds of Spain:
 Innocent children slain,
Women borne off with a wail of despair,
 Prisoners vilely torn,
 Blinded, and left forlorn.
Down with the fiends to the Devil's own lair!
1870.

A LEGEND OF ALEXANDRIA.

NESTLING by Potomac river,
Slumb'rous Alexandria sees,
Where the waters flash and quiver,
Ruffled by the Southern breeze,
Vessels sailing on forever,
Freighted full from golden leas.

On the hill a spire is keeping
Watch above the sluggish mart.
Round about the dead are sleeping
Till the day when all shall start.
Past the bitter, bitter weeping ;
Past the anguish of the heart.

Every mound some message beareth,
Chiselled deep in snowy stone,
Telling how the loved one shareth
Bliss that never here was known.
But an ancient tablet weareth
This: "A Stranger's Grave" alone.

And beneath, so says tradition,
Lies a lady nobly bred.
Lured by love's entrancing vision,
From her English home she fled.
Years passed by on wings elysian.
Here she found her lowly bed.

But the loving sunlight presses
 Warmly on her robe of sod ;
And the gentle shade caresses
 As the branches sway and nod ;
And the zephyr softly blesses,
 Like a soul at peace with God.

There a weary wanderer tarried,
 Journeying to lands afar.
Sore the weight his bosom carried,
 Mourning many a vanished star !
But to yonder grave were married
 Hopes that life could never mar.

Visions of his early folly
 Trooped across his dreaming brain,—
Yule-time merriment and holly ;
 Courtly dance and blithesome strain ;
Love's delight and melancholy,—
 Things he ne'er might know again.

Then a face serene and saintly,
 Idol of his youthful days,
Holy white and smiling faintly,
 Dawned upon his inward gaze :
And the tablet, carven quaintly,
 Vanished in a golden haze.

Once again his suit he urges ;
 Once again consent she yields.
Pass they ocean's solemn surges,
 Crowded cities, silent fields.
Then the wealth of bliss that merges
 Lives and souls like herald shields.

Once again he saw her fading,
Slowly fading, day by day :
Sorrowful, without upbraiding,
For the loved one gone astray.
Angels seemed her footsteps aiding.
Smiling, thus she passed away.

With a sigh the spell was broken.
Forms and voices none were there.
At his feet the solemn token ;
All around the sunny glare.
Yet a name no lip had spoken
Seemed to linger on the air.

1870.

THE ARCTIC QUEEN.

HER palace doors are open wide to-night,
Her palace doors beside the northern pole,
Where through the centuries, right gayly dight
With ice-gems glistening in the frosty light,
She sits and listens to the onward roll.

The gathering roll of millions on the march,
The ever-broadening tide of human feet.
She sees the distant east and west o'erarch,—
“And soon,” she cries, “the shaggy northern larch
And desert wastes their fearless steps shall greet.

“ Ah, surely I have waited long, dear Lord ;
And long, too long, these boundless realms of mine
Have lain all destitute of verdant sward,
And choral voices through the greenwood poured,
And the warm shapes of loveliness divine.

“ Through the long night (and night upon my heart
Hangs heavily, though darkness there is none),
In the cold, steel-like splendor do I start
And gasp for joy to see the ships depart
From the soft regions of the sultry sun.

“ They see the slant rays lie along the sky ;
They see the flaming billows rise and fall ;
And some, the daring ones, who press more nigh
Hear a quick crackling, rising sharp and high,
And a dull roar like whirlwinds in a hall.

“ O feeble-sighted ones and gross of sense !
Can they not see the windows gleaming far ?
Can they not trace the splendor streaming thence
To where I stand in hateful indolence
With outstretched hands beneath the polar star ? ”

1870.

THE NORTHERN PALACE.

THE banners, the banners are waving to-night,—
The banners of crimson and gold !
That flutter and flame on the marvelling sight,
With tremulous radiance, roseate bright,
O'er the mystical palace unrolled.

Walls, pillars, and arches shine crystalline clear,
The dome has a marvellous gleam ;
And, full of the beauty that borders on fear,
Fantastical figures of fretwork appear,
Like the forms of an Orient dream.

With every deep swell of the waters below
The tessellate flooring upheaves ;
And the palace waves solemnly stately and slow
To music celestial, while starlets of snow
Fall, glancing, from numberless eaves.

Within is a glory that passes compare,
A splendor man never may see,
A lustre supernal and misty and rare,
A throbbing of incense and luminous air,
As the breathing of seraphs must be.

There, wrapped in a dream that the centuries love,
Trooping slowly and noiselessly by,
The Queen lies aslumber, while drowsily move
Soft lights o'er her couch and the arms that above
In folded luxuriance lie.

1870.

PARIS AT BAY.

WHAT will the beautiful city do,
Girt with a cordon of steel and fire ?
Pale is her glory of golden hue,
Slowly totters its crumbling spire.

Her crowds no longer in gay attire
The airy goddess of mirth pursue,
Her altar of love is a funeral pyre—
What will the beautiful city do?

How changed from the days when the monarchs drank
Deep from the wine of her blood-red cup!
She frowned, and the proudest nations shrank;
She tore them down, and she lifted up.
Glad were the vanquished her draught to sup,
Eagerly joining the revellers' rank;
They feared her sword, but they loved her cup—
How changed from the days when the monarchs drank!

Hers were splendor and wealth and power;
Hers are anguish and wrath and gloom.
Lightly she valued the golden hour;
Sad and silent she waits her doom.
A poison lurked in the purple bloom
That tainted many a fragrant bower;
The hand wrote Mene about the room—
Vanish splendor and wealth and power.

She stands at bay with her shattered sword;
Her eyes are gleaming with sullen glare;
Sternly fronting the hostile horde,
With the valor born of a strong despair—
A strength all boundless to do and dare
Rather than yield to a foreign lord.
No hand shall ever her sceptre share—
She stands at bay with her shattered sword.

Ah, would that it might not be too late
To cancel the sins of a thousand years,
And safely sever from iron fate,
By priceless tribute of blood and tears,
The future freighted with horrid fears,
The destiny hovering desolate,
The flapping fiend that lours and leers—
Would that it might not be too late !
1870.

LAS TUNAS.

(SUPPOSED NARRATION OF A CUBAN SOLDIER.)

SWEET was the scene around us,
Sweet was the breeze that found us,
From many a merry revel in blossom-brightened
dales ;
At our feet were tropic flowers,
And around, the rainbow bowers,
And the thorny-guarded cactus, and the regal purple
veils.

Behind, the mountain-passes
Through huge and wooded masses,
The grim sierra's bulwarks, left narrow winding way ;
The sea in distance slumbered
With verdurous isles unnumbered,
And many a nook of Eden all bright before us lay.

The palm-trees bended, crooning ;
The river glided, swooning,

Exhausted by his journey through the rugged upland
soils ;

And there beside his borders,

Free Cuba's faithful warders,

We vowed her valleys never should become the Span-
iard's spoils.

Above us shone the banner,—

The dazzling island banner,—

That bore in sacred beauty the star of Yara yet.

Three stripes were brightly gleaming,

For each Department streaming,—

A trinity of glory that shall never, never set !

With eager hand, yet steady,

Some poised the rifle ready,

In resolute silence waiting for the deadly signal—

“ Fire ! ”

But most were ranged in crescent,

With the sword, which every peasant

Bears, like a worthy offspring of the old Castilian sire.

“ Oh, not the hirelings yonder,—

See how they pause and ponder !—

And well they may, degenerate, unworthy sons of Spain !

Theirs 'tis not to inherit

The grand chivalric spirit ;

But in the faithful island the Cids revive again.

“ ‘ The ever-faithful island ! ’

Yes, faithful from the highland,

The glorious old sierra, to the ever-flowing sea ;

Faithful to Freedom's story,

Faithful to truth and glory,

Faithful, forever faithful, the ocean gem shall be.

“ See, steadily advancing,
Yon line of bayonets glancing.
What though they have *three* thousand and we are only
two !

These swords shall overthrow them.
Men of Camáguey, show them
What the freeborn sons of Cuba in her righteous cause
can do.”

So spake Quesada proudly ;
And the cheer that followed loudly,
The mighty storm of vivas bursting from every soul,
Proved that their hearts were in it ;
And for one glorious minute
The whole impassioned army began to surge and roll.

From skirmishers forward scattering
Comes a desultory pattering.
From bush and copse and palm-tree our riflemen reply ;
And gaudy coats are dropping,
But the column, never stopping,
Drives swiftly on toward us, like clouds across the sky.

A sudden roar outcrashes,
Three hundred rattling flashes
Stream swiftly from the covert ; down goes the glittering steel.
Wounded and dead and dying
In struggling heaps are lying.
How at the sudden havoc the torn battalia reel !

Clustering, half in terror
Seeing their fatal error,

They turn to storm the thicket ; but with a mighty yell,
As if the fiend had won them,
Our swordsmen rush upon them
Like a host of raging demons from the very mouth of
hell.

The blows fall fast and faster,
The bayonet quits its master,
And quickly surges homeward the sword-blade's desperate thrust.
Another volley sweeping,
And, from the covert leaping,
Marmol and all his rifles dash at the shattered crust.

Back with a wild outcrying
The Spanish vanguard's flying,
Back like Apollyon's cohorts before St. Michael's
blade !

Then what a deafening roar !
“ Marmol for evermore !
Viva, forever viva ! Viva the whole brigade ! ”

But still their line, deploying,
Maintains a fire annoying,
And yonder in the hollow the cannon pound away,
And shells go screaming o'er us,
Or, plunging down before us,
Scatter their deadly fragments in showers of iron spray.

And many a gallant fellow
Makes the moist earth his pillow,

And many a dismal moaning is heard by copse and
tree.

But our line remains unshaken,
And muskets newly taken
Answer their former masters with defiance full and
free.

And so, with furtive dashes
And brief occasional clashes,
Where trivial knots of foemen contend for glade or
wood,
The line now forward urging,
Now slowly backward surging,
For two good hours we held them at bay beside the
flood.

Once more the steel is glancing,
In columns twain advancing,
For, taught by rude disaster, they shun the middle
way.
They aim to turn the crescent—
Now, Camagueyan peasant,
Stand firm for all who love you; strike as the lightnings
slay !

The first sweeps up the river
With a cry that makes it quiver.
Three times our fire outcrashes, and thrice their course
is checked.
Then charge they, shouting mainly,
And, struggling fierce but vainly,
Our left comes reeling backward, in wild disorder
wrecked.

Haste, hasten to the water !
Haste to the field of slaughter !
Haste, or the left is ruined ; haste, or they gain our rear !
Then came the order, ringing,
And half the centre springing
Dashed swiftly at the Spaniards with a grand, resistless
cheer.

Gods ! how our soldiers fought them !
Right well, I deem, they taught them
Macheta's deadly prowess when swung by desperate
hands.

Backward and forward tossing,
With glistening weapons crossing,
A motley throng becrimsoned the Verde's shining
sands.

Some struggled in the water ;
Some dyed the grass with slaughter ;
Some stabbed, some struck, some shouted, or yelled,
or shrieked, or fired,
Now for a moment severing,
Then furiously endeavoring
To check or crowd the foemen, with a zeal that never
tired.

Meanwhile the right was busy
In a strife that made one dizzy :
It rested, well protected, on a little steep ravine,
Where a brook went seaward leaping.
The volunteers are sweeping
To turn our flank ; but yonder, Marmol is there between.

Swiftly his line extending,
And steadily backward trending,

At every point he meets them, and everywhere repels.

A strife like Satan's revels !

For fiercer far than devils,

With centuries of outrage, each Cuban bosom swells.

But Quesada's face grew pallid,

Though still he strove and rallied,

For he dreaded more than ever the issue of the day.

Reversed was now the crescent,

The wings were retrorescent,

And on his weakened centre pressed Spain's reserved
array.

A score of horse came clattering,

Reeking and foam-bespattering,

And Cespedes among them, his thoughtful face aglow.

"Hold them a little longer !

Hold them, we'll soon be stronger !

Hold them, for Santa Lucia is coming from below !"

Then what a joyous quiver

Thrilled from ravine to river !

From right and left and centre rose one exultant cry :

"Viva Bayamo's coming !

The gallant marquis' coming !

Down with the Spanish hirelings ! Let the invaders
die !"

Is it Echo's voice replying

From the woods all sombre lying ?

No ; yonder down the hillside, beyond our distant
right,

A thousand men are rushing,

Each patriot cheek is flushing,

Each eye ecstatic dancing, at the glory of the sight.

Some galloping on horses,
Some as the greyhound courses,
They fall with sudden slaughter on the wavering volun-
teers,
Back on their centre reeling,
With many a wild appealing,
While the battle-cry of Cuba is ringing in their ears.

Over unnumbered corses
Sweep our united forces.
Quesada and the marquis are charging side by side.
A thousand gallants more
Join from the river shore.
Not all the Spanish legions can stem that roaring tide.

The phalanx grim and serried
Of regulars is buried
In the rush, as countless surges a sand-wall overwhelm.
Far from his gun in fear
Flies the pale cannoneer,
And the storm-tost flags are whirling like a ship without
a helm.

Far from the coveted mountains
That hide the river fountains,
Down to the distant ocean the boastful foe is borne
(Yet bravely have they striven),
And our vivas rend high heaven
As the blazing star of Yara goes careering grandly on.

Theirs are the pains and dolours,
And ours the guns and colors,

And the arms that dot the valley and strew the scene
of strife,
Ours the victor's glory,
And ours the stirring story
That lends a thrill of rapture to the years of peaceful
life.

But in many a mountain Aidenn
Some olive-tinted maiden
By the orange-grove is listening for her lover's lone
guitar ;
And many a wife is gasping,
The wayside plantain grasping,
In eager terror waiting for tidings from the war.

Ah, well, from other fingers
The maid that yonder lingers
May learn to love the music as well as his that died ;
And time the grief will mellow,
And soothe the aching pillow,
Of her whose mate is sleeping by the Verde's crimson
side.

The dearer is the offering,
The nobler is the proffering,
And all that's worth the winning is won by sacrifice.
The land is ruined that falters,
For Freedom's holy altars
Require a rich oblation for each transcendent prize.

Spurning all hesitation,
The young Minerva nation

Has flung into the conflict treasure and heart and sword.
Liberty's fight, she's fought it ;
Liberty's work, she's wrought it ;
Still works and strives in darkness without one cheering
word.

1871.

SPRING'S TREASURY.

FAR in the Southland warm and blest
Dwells the Queen whom we love the best.
There, by a wealth of luxurious gold
Swathed and sheltered from harm and cold,
In a budding beauty that never dies,
Slumber a thousand blooms divine ;
And some are ruddy as evening skies,
And some in a flaming crimson shine.
Through the gladsome round of the circling hours
The goddess walks in her gay parterre,
And they grow more lovely, the lovely flowers,
At the very thought of her presence there.
Crocus and hyacinth, lily and rose,
Snowdrop, anemone, columbine,
With every zephyr that softly flows,
Sway like censers before a shrine.
Many a bowerie's velvet screen
Opens to give her room to pass ;
And rippling waves of shadowy green
Frolic over the bladed grass.

1871.

LOVE AND LIFE.

Love is like a flowing river,
Broad and wondrous fair.
On its breast the sunbeams quiver,
Sparkling everywhere.
How the far cerulean mountains
Smile upon its birth,
As the happy-hearted fountains,
Laughing, dance to earth !

Dwell within its mystic shadows
Visions never told,
Purple isles, elysian meadows,
Realms of cloudy gold.
In its ruffled expanse glassing,
Wanders mutely by
All the holy whiteness, massing
Warm in yonder sky.

Titan power that stream possesses,
Ay, and sorely needs.
Farther down are stagnant places,
Full of tangled weeds,
Sickly with the fragrance vapid
Of the lily's breath,
And the raving, roaring rapid
Strives for life and death.

Comes the gloom of cliffs o'erbending,
And the dizzying whirl,
And the breathless interblending
In a shower of pearl,

'Mid the rainbow's mocking wonders
And the deafening roar
Of a thousand wrangling thunders
Lost for evermore.

Life is like a goodly prairie
Decked with wondrous flowers,
Ever blooming, never chary,
Fresh from Eden bowers.
But the thorns among the roses
Sorely, deeply wound,
And a nearer view discloses
Rough and broken ground.

Slowly from the dreamy river
An enchanted mist
Rises like a spirit, ever
Tinged with amethyst.
Round us blooms a world elysian,
Countless glories blaze ;
Such a glamour o'er our vision
Casts that wondrous haze.

Change the amethyst to sable,
All is dark of hue.
Gold, and lo, Aladdin's fable
Bursts upon the view.
Love it is that drapes in anguish
Bliss or earnest strife,
Hopes that gleam, or doubts that languish,
All our life.

BORDER BEN.

NEVER a man in Bates or Cass
 Could stand the force of his swinging blow.
Many a trim Missouri lass
 Rued his wooing in shame and woe :
He cared for nothing on earth below ;
 He dreaded nothing in heaven above ;
His wrath was deadly to friend or foe,
 But deadlier still was his evil love.

Neither a Reb nor a Yank was he,
 But a 'bushwhacker, bred to trick and trade ;
For well he loved the lord to be
 Of his own true rifle and bowie-blade.
And when he rode with his reckless band,
 Whisky-wild and mad for a fray,
You had thought him the son of an older land,
 The robber-chief of an earlier day.

But there came a time when the war was o'er,
And neighbor and brother could meet once more,
Together warm by the fireside glow,
Clear together the winter snow,
Reap together, together sow,
And all with only a passing frown
Or a brawl in harvest-field or town
(The petty quarrels of daily life),
To tell of the vanished years of strife.
Peace had returned to the hearts of men,
All save the spirit of Border Ben.

But he for many another day
Rode and rieved at his own wild will,
Bearing ever his luckless prey
To the cabin under the rounding hill,
For the law was weak, and his arm was strong.
Men talked of lynching,—and was it wrong?
But others counselled to bide their time,
As the Chilian watches, still and long,
Waiting and waiting in hope to lime
The condor-king of his mountain clime,
And none was ready to lead the throng.

'Twas a luckless day that threw in his way
Willoughby's Fan, on her snowy mare.
Willoughby's Fan! Mortal man
Never saw feature or form more fair.
After the backwoods fashion dressed,
With hands, and feet to the ankle, bare,
A straw sun-bonnet that lay at rest
On a rippling river of golden hair,
And over her limbs and over her breast
A gown of calico, clinging there;

And still the truest of head and heart,
The sweetest, the purest, the dearest girl,
Scarcely as yet a full-blown woman!
With a face that smiled as the waters curl,
And a voice that soothed as the waters purl,
And lips that parted as lovers part,—
Thoroughly good and kind and human!

I cannot tell you just *how* he found her,—
Her sturdy, hearty, and daring brother,—

But all the grasses and green things round her
Were rudely trampled and overturned.
Her breath came in gasps, like a nightmare smother,
Or a fitful wind through a stifling pall,
And wild was her bosom's rise and fall,
As the flickering light of a dying spark,
And on her throat was a fearful mark,
A purple mark that throbbed and burned,—
The mark of a sinewy male right hand.

She lay in the shade of the moist woodland.
High overhead the branches sighed,
And the golden-shaft drummed and the wood-tapper
cried,
And flowerets round her pretty feet
Bowed in sympathy sad and sweet
For the little, pitiful, human flower,
Fragrant and fit for a king to cherish,
Plucked for less than a forceful hour
And flung by the wayside there, to perish.

“Poor little Fannie!”—Dan burst forth—
“Who is the fiend that has done this thing?
I'll follow him to the end of the earth;
I'll teach him how border bullets sting;
I'll send him down to the flames of hell!
Yes, God above us in yonder sky,
You God who looked on this lonesome dell
And saw what happened when none was nigh,—
Saw it and knew it, and would not save!—
By You I swear, whatever You are,
To hound that devil into his grave,
To send him down to his hellish den.

—But tell me, sister, the villain's name.”
Faltering faintly the answer came,
With a gush of tears and of lambent shame,
Of shame and sorrow and pain and dread,
As half arising she bowed her head.
Sobbing and weeping she answered, “Ben.”

It was night, black night, when they reached the
farm,
And she slid from her hold on her brother's arm,
And forward fell at her mother's feet,
Anxiously coming her child to greet,
At the feet of her mother and gray-haired sire
Bent and broken by toil and age;
And Dan found words in his strangling ire—
Hoarse words, harsh muttered and dense with rage—
To tell the story of Ben's desire,
To hint the whole of that fearful harm.
“But as sure as ever there's God in the skies,
I'll hunt that devil till one of us dies.”

There came a knock at the door.
Forward he stepped and flung it open.
By a sudden flash was the darkness broken.
Followed a sharp quick “Spang!”
Then a loud laugh outrang.
Young Willoughby lay on the floor.
And over the threshold, beside the corse,
By the bridle still holding his peering horse,
A revolver smoking yet in his hand,
And looking as when he led his band,
Proud with the pride of the devil's den,
Strode handsome, hideous Border Ben.

He gazed a moment with mocking leer,
He spoke a moment with cruel jeer,
Then turned and leaped to saddle, and then
Vanished out of their stricken sight,
Wildly galloping through the night.

That was the night of his evil star,
For Border Ben had gone too far.
With a thirsty glare that craved his blood,
That star came dancing through the wood,
And out on the prairie where all was still
Save the cricket's chirp and the whippoorwill—

It had grown to a torch of fire:
And under its smoky, billowy light
A score of horsemen rode that night,
With brows that knotted and hands that clenched,
And if so be there were cheeks that blenched,
They were not fully revealed to sight,—
Nought was revealed but ire.

Alone and hopeless and brought to bay,—
They had trailed him to his lair,—
Sustained by only the thirst to slay,
And scorn for the men who had been his prey,
He fought like a grizzly bear.
Every stroke claimed limb or life;
Every thrust of his ghastly knife
Sent plashing on the slippery floor
Pool after pool of human gore.

But at last he was stunned and tied.
Powerless longer to work them harm,
And spouting crimson from head and arm,
They hurried him then outside.

They bore him off to the neighboring wood,
Conscious, but weak from the loss of blood,
Sullen and silent, but all uncowed
In the midst of that jeering harrying crowd,
Without a fear or a thought of hope,
Or a glance at that heaven whose boundless scope
Spread so grandly over them all,
That heaven reserved for his only pall,
His only coffin and shroud and bier,
The only source from which a tear
Could ever fall on his blanching heart,
Without a tremor, or sob, or start,
Without a sorrow, without a prayer,
He went with his executioners there.

Down in the woodlands, sombre and dim,
A rope was hanging over a limb :
The noose at the end had been made for him.

They triced him up, and they swung him off.
A sudden spasm ; a gurgling cough ;
A furious wrenching his hands to free ;
Feet that kicked from the doubling knee ;
Eyes that bulged in the dark unviewed ;
Bowed neck and straightening attitude ;
And then a tremor, and then, and then—
That was the last of Border Ben.
1871.

THE RIDE OF THE SEVENTH CAVALRY.

OUT across the waste of prairie,
Soft savannas, uplands airy,
Ragged gulches tracked by no man,
 Rocky passes grim and hoar,
With the phantom of a foeman
 Ever flitting on before,
Rode they seventy miles and more.

Home behind, but hope within them;
Strifes ahead, and strength to win them;
Full of life and dauntless spirit,
Eager for the prize of merit,
Ringing out a pleasant tune
In the merry sun of June,
Weapons flashing, clanging, clashing,
Banner floating far and free,—
Rode the Seventh Cavalry.

Seventy miles—their steeds were jaded,
And the glory waned and faded,
As the staring sun, unshaded,
 Drained their spirits more and more.
Listless grew their mien, and haggard,
Backward trailed the troopers laggard,
And the column almost staggered
 As it slowly onward bore.
All around the cactus thickets
Stood, presenting thorny pickets,

And the hillocks high and lonely
Beckoned on and on, but only
Opened an endless way
To the far bluff-lands gray.
Never a note of bird
In the dull march was heard ;
Never a streamlet sang ;
Never a wild deer sprang ;
All, all was weariness and disarray.

Sudden as start the quickened dead,
Rouses every drooping head.
Every pulse is madly thrilling,
Every voice the message shrilling—
Swift it speeds from front to rear—
That at last the foe is near.
Yonder, mounted, on the hill,
Sits the leader strong and still,
One hand resting on the mane,
One hand pointing to the plain,
His face turned backward glowing,
His sunlit hair outflowing :
Oh, grand chivalric bearing !
Oh, heart that died in daring !

Over a line of blue
Where the river wound its way,
Under the trees wherethrough
The sunlight shot its ray,
In the lap of the valley gay
The Indian city lay,—
A city to move in a night,
A city of pole and tent,

That had dropped like a bird from its flight
On the heart of the continent.
Full four miles it spread,
Flapping with blankets red
That were given to purchase peace
From a war which never shall cease
While the Sioux and the white man meet.
And on the ground underfeet
Lay the ruthless spoils and pillage
Of many a border village,
And many a scalp-lock bright,
Won in the dead of night,
Danced in the air overhead.

The cavalry shouted again,
And they dashed from the hill to the plain.
Tired sinews grew strong with the rush,
As they burst the thick hedges of brush,
Rattling down, scattering stones left and right
Like sparkles struck out in the night.

The scabbards swung loose at their sides,
Clattered loudly on leather and hides.
The carbines that swayed at their backs,
The whirlwind of dust in their tracks,
The blades that flashed out in the sun,
And the beat of the feet on the rock,
As it rang with the clang and the shock,
And the peal of the steel on the stone!

The pebbles sped lightly before
As they smote on the silvery shore.
From pastern and fetlock and hoof

The spray-drops flew outward like rain,
As it flies from the edge of the roof,
As it splashes from panel and pane.
Saddle-deep in the ford,
With revolver and sword,
They were plunging right onward amain.

Suddenly all the woodlands hoar
Were filled with an infernal roar,
Which, rising more and more and more,
Appalled the invaders' ear,
With yell and whoop and shriek and cry,
And sounds of discord wild and high,
While every open space of sky
Hell's portal seemed, that shocked the eye
With hideous shapes of fear.
For every tree-trunk leaped to life
With painted Sioux and scalping-knife,
And rifle poised with care.
Up from the sedgy bank they start,
Out from the thicket's treacherous heart,
The boughs strange fruitage bear.
On either side, above, below,
The stream swarms with the howling foe,
The river boils with lead ;
And many a trooper, smitten down
By sudden bolt through breast or crown,
Drops headlong to its bed.
Small time to reckon friends or foes,
A countless horde the front enclose,
With brandished tomahawk and spear
A host come sweeping on our rear—
Let dead men guard the dead !

Ride for life, ride for life !
 Sink the spur ; ply the knife ;
 Urge them on, urge them on—
 'Tis their last race they run.
 How the balls whistle by !
 Knotted brow, staring eye !
 Did he fall ?—Look not back,
 There are fiends on the track.
 And they gain—ah, they gain !
 How they skim o'er the plain !
 How they crowd left and right !
 And in front, what a sight !
 All is lost ; cease the flight.

They circled round the little hill ;
 They wheeled about, and then sat still,
 With iron hand and iron will,—
 Each in his company.
 A welded ring for woe or weal,
 A ring of horse and man and steel
 And lightning-flash and thunder-peal,
 Stood the Seventh Cavalry.

Round them and round a host of Sioux,
 With taunting yell and wild halloo
 And tossing spears and blankets, flew,—
 Whirlwind of devilry !
 Now stretched beside the tossing mane,
 Now all astart with sudden pain,
 Now crashing madly o'er the plain
 Straight at their enemy.

The carbines flashed around the line,
 As bursts the blaze from mountain pine,

Or the red leaping of the mine
Glares on the scenery.
Three thousand rifles answering rang,
The hurtling chaos inward sprang,
Sabres swooped out with clash and clang,
Sang the steel savagely.

Firm to the last, they fought and fell,
While round them, o'er them, broke the swell
Of that triumphant sea of hell,
Smiting relentlessly.
Three hundred corpses gleaming white
In glare of noon and gloom of night,
With eyeballs staring broad and bright—
Lo, the Seventh Cavalry !

1876.

JOSEPH THE NEZ PERCÉ.

FROM the Northern desolation
Comes a cry of exultation,
“ It is ended ! He has yielded ! And the stubborn
fight is won.”
Let the nation in its glory
Bow with shame before the story
Of the hero it has ruined and the evil it has done.

How he prayed while hope remained,
Though the white man's hand was stained
With the blood, that cried for vengeance, of his murdered
kin and clan,
For the home the good God gave him,
And the treaty swore to save him,
For a shelter for his children, for the right to be a man !

Then the troops began to hound him,
And he wrapped his blanket round him,
And he called his braves to follow, and he smote them
hip and thigh.

But the hosts grew vast and vaster,
And the whirlwind of disaster
Drove him out across the mountains and beneath an
alien sky.

Through the continental ridges,
Over tottering torrent-bridges,
By the verge of black abysses, in the shade of moun-
tains hoar,
Herds and wives and children bearing,
Months they journeyed, toiling, daring,
With an army trailing after and another crouched
before.

Thrice the sudden blow descended,
Roar and flash and crashing blended :
Twice the rearguard faced and checked them till the
hunted tribe was free.
Once he reeled, but swiftly rallied,
Forth upon the spoilers sallied,
Drove them headlong into shelter, captured all their
cannonry.

But the mountains could not shield him,
And the snowy heights revealed him,
And the false friends would not aid him, and his goal
was far away.

Hampered by his weak and wounded,
Stripped and harried and surrounded,
Still the chieftain of the Northland like a lion stood
at bay.

From the freedom that he sought for,
 From the dear land that he fought for,
 He is riven by a nation that has spurned its plighted
 word,
 By the Christians who have given
 To the heathen—gracious Heaven!—
 With the one hand theft and falsehood, with the other,
 ball and sword.
 1877.

ROSE.

DEAR little three-year-old sportsman of mine,
 Queen of the woodland, my merry-heart Rose!
 See how the starry eyes sparkle and shine:
 Out with Papa to the shooting she goes.

Gentle gray Alice trots briskly ahead;
 Rover is ranging the fields by our side;
 Through the red ragweed you see his white head;
 Waves the long fringe like a plume in its pride.

Whoa! Here's the stubble—now look to the lines;
 Sportsman and gun they are gone with a bound;
 How in the sunlight old Silky-hair shines,
 Velvety nostrils held close to the ground!

Twisting and trailing. Hi! steady, boy, there!
 Standing—I thought so—as carven in stone!
 “Steady, boy, steady!”—the hazel eyes glare,
 Lifts the quick ear as he catches the tone.

Note the neck arched to his quivering side,
Nostrils expanded, and motionless tail,
Stiff-spreading limbs, as if stemming a tide,
Firm as the ash in the midsummer gale.

Beautiful, sure, is his spotless attire—

Hark ! a loved voice chides my lingering foot.

“What is Papa doing? Why don’t he fire?

What is Papa doing? Shoot, Papa, shoot !”

Drops the quick lark as he springs from the meadow,
Falls the swift dove as he dives through the air,
Shower the blackbirds like handfuls of shadow,—
Little Queen Rose takes them all to her care.

Onward we drive. I can hear her behind me
Prattling the fables that childhood loves well.

“Baby-bird ; mother-bird”—how they remind me
Of the great secrets that science can tell ;

How through the ages the instincts eternal
Flow to the child from the ancestor’s frame :
Comes from the mother the love ever vernal.
What from the father?—The hunger for game.

Well, there’s a showing !—I hear her, unseen,
Pleading my cause in the realm where she rules :
“Poor little birdie, Papa didn’t mean—
Wouldn’t hurt birdie”—my zeal how it cools !

“Poor little bunny, right there in the nose !
Did Papa shoot him?—Oh, bad Papa, bad !
Was he a bad Papa?”—Hush, little Rose :
Let us stop preaching, and play and be glad.

Questions like yours may be answered in time.

Are we not made to be eaten and eat?

Death to the feeble,—conception sublime!—

Life to the strong and the bold and the fleet!

Tangled we are in a mystical skein:

Right melts in wrong, and the wrong turns to right:

Soon comes a sportsman to shoot it in twain,

Plunging us all in the darkness of night.

Bright little Rose, I remember right well

How you first shrank at the sight of the dead,

Though but a bird.—Did some mystical spell

Stretch from that blankness its hand o'er thy head?

Who could have taught thee to feel the dread foe?

Who could have warned thee to shudder and fear?

Now the dull tread wakes no echoes of woe.

Now the weird tokens are petted and dear.

Wondrous! How soon the mysterious voices

Born with the soul become voiceless and dumb!

Only three years, yet she laughs and rejoices:—

Still booms the warning of evil to come.

Yet one would fancy the bird he had stricken

Endeth not all with its suffering here;

Yet one *must* feel, when the darling ones sicken,

Life, and not death, fills the round of the sphere.

Death is but death to the walking or flying;

Life is still life in its gladness and joy.

Why should we question (what need of replying?)

Happier future for bird and for boy?

CHRISTMAS, 1877.

THE ISLE OF KENT.

MERRILY shines the summer sun
Over the isle of Kent ;
Merrily chasing, the ripples run,
Frolic the breezes in airy fun,
Robin, wren, mocking-bird every one
Join in the merriment.

But here in the oak-trees' solemn shade,
Where the sentinel cedars stand,
The old, old church that the fathers made
Looms forsaken and disarrayed,
Frowning on Maryland.

Where the voice of praise went ringing free,
The fox has made his home ;
The wild-bee hives in the sacristy ;
And the spectral moon looks in to see
The white-faced owl at his ministry
In the heart of the chancel gloom.

Where are the faces, grave and gay,
Of many a vanished year ?
Cumbersome coaches and quaint array,
Priests and people, ah, where are they ?
The tide of time has ebbed away,
And has left it stranded here.

Yet the days have been when its shadow fell
Far by the Severn side,
And the battered remnant that fought so well
Gladly came in that shade to dwell
Over the gleaming tide.

The bay is dotted with flecks of white,
For the fleet has come again.
But the Golden Lion is broad and bright,
And the village wakes to the stir of fight,
And the answer rings like a peal at night,—
“We will live or die like men.”

I see the Commonwealth standard fly,
And the cross that mocks the sun.
“Hey for Saint Mary’s!” the Catholics cry;
And I hear the Puritans’ strong reply,
“In the name of God, fall on.”

It passes. Out on the darkened air
Rings a peal of noisy glee;
’Mid the thunder’s crash and the lightning’s glare
The red-coats hold in the chancel bare
Their godless revelry.

Again there cometh a solemn boom
Over the glancing bay.
The great walls shudder, the hollow tomb
Adds its voice to that sound of gloom:
Brothers are dealing their brothers’ doom
In the battle far away.

The wars they come, and the wars they go,
As the centuries journey by,
But the old church stands in weal or woe,
In the summer sun or the winter snow,
In the wild wind’s sweep or the zephyr’s flow,
With its stern, unwinking eye.

And gazing out from the sombre pines
Over the waters clear,
A deeper meaning my heart divines ;
I seem to read in the battered lines
That something greater than stones and shrines
Is keeping a vigil here.

1878.

THE PROBLEM.

FIRST VOICE.

IN His image God hath moulded man,
Hence our likeness through the veil we scan ;
Vaster, grander, but the self-same plan.
Hear the rumbling of His chariot run.
Smiles He in the brightness of the sun.
Frowns He ere the tempest has begun.
In the land of Beersheba and Dan
Lofty souls to clearer vision won.
Just, His promise stands for evermore,
Yet with lightning-stroke His arm subdues.
Countless blessings on the faithful pour ;
Sire to son His jealous wrath pursues.
Friendship, foeship, ye are free to choose.
God, great God, we tremble and adore.

SECOND VOICE.

Man has cast his shadow on the skies,
Fringed it round with gorgeous draperies,
Bowed him down and worshipped it in awe.
Blurs, not visions, were the shapes he saw.

Toiling slow, the patient seeker tries,
Link by link, to trace the chain of law.
But beyond his utmost reach there lies
Still the gateless wall of mysteries.
What is God? The spirit of the Now;
Mainspring of the future drawing near;
Fountain of the past; the Why and How;
Cause; Force; Order: nothing more is clear.
One great question rings our little sphere;
And the answer never greets us here.

THIRD VOICE.

Through the mist there comes one little ray,—
Earth and heaven are pitiless and gray,—
Surely, surely, it will soon be day.
Hope will brighten into life anew,
Earth be green again, and waters blue,—
Shall I shut the glimmer from my view?
Dimmed and stained and broken on the way,
Still from being's very fount it flew.
All the noblest in our nature blending
Makes an image we can well adore:
Past the wall the olden skies are bending;
Still the ocean mirrors as before:
God the spirit, mounting, not descending;
God, grand God, we worship evermore.

CHRISTABEL.

THIRD PART.

In continuation of Coleridge's Poem.

DE BRACY has sought the forest lone.

The sun like a fire burns high in heaven ;
But the breath of the aisles by the mossy stone
Is light and sweet as the soul that's shriven.
Seven dim archways centre there ;
Seven red flowers are blooming rare ;
And the chalice mosses gray and brown
Have wrought on the stone a cross and crown.
A spot where hermit that crown might win !
—But De Bracy's soul grew chill within.

Why is the ring that his lady gave
Cloudy and dull as the turbid wave ?
Why does the harp that his lady strook
Quiver and strain beneath his look ?
Thrice came the cock-crow faint and shrill,
And he heard a sound like a fairy rill,
And a wild-bird's murmur—and all was still.
De Bracy's heart was numb with fear.
“Surely,” he thought, “the saints are near.”
So he dashed a cross on heart and brow,
With a hurried prayer that was half a vow :
“Save from the blight that is doubly chill ;
From the ill in good that is worse than ill.”

There came an answer fine and clear ;
It stirred not nerve, it touched not ear :

But De Bracy's heart grew light and strong,
And he struck the chords, and he raised his song.
I ween that song contained a spell
To rive the very deeps of hell ;
And the harp but thrilled to my lady's lore
As it thrilled in the holy days of yore.
For the lady sang by bell and book,
And fiends, affrighted, fled her look.
Yet she had said they would work her ill
When her soul was free and her heart was chill.
In her lovely child she was living still.

But higher potency is thine,
O harp, that poet arms entwine,
And poet fingers strike the strings
Leaping with fine imaginings :
For, whatsoever worldlings deem,
The lily maiden's purest dream,
The crooning mother's heart of love,
The warrior's storm-embattled glove,
Who fights to save the cross of God
And falls victorious on the sod,
May each some secret gain, of power
To aid it in the wizard hour,
From the high inspiration given
To bards by holiest happiest Heaven.

The stone with its chaliced cross had stood
Moveless for aye in the haunted wood,
Though hermit summoned with sign and prayer
And the saints of Mary were chanting there.
But De Bracy's voice and De Bracy's eye
Thrilled like the flames of the Northern sky
With the very magic of minstrelsy.

And a ray of sunshine, that had played
Through the web of boughs on the shadowed glade,
Suddenly shifted, dancing on
The crown and the cross and the great gray stone ;
And they heaved and swayed with the dancing light,
And a portal opened before his sight,
A portal dim and dank and dread
As the door that leads to the Christless dead.
One gleam of light came creeping through ;
But the light was pale and the light was blue.

Into the portal strode the bard.
The slippery pave rang loud and hard.
The echoes answered o'er and o'er,
The *echoes* answered—and something more ;
And he turned with a cry to the closing door.
But the great gray stone came to with a clang,
As though some vast portcullis rang,
In an unholy paynim hold,
Behind a champion rashly bold,
Shut from the sun and the breezes free,
Snared in the den of sorcery.
Then he heard the echoes laugh and roar
Down gallery-roof, and wall, and floor.
Ay, he heard the echoes—and something more.

But he clenched his teeth, and he set his brow,
And he drew in his breath, and he thought a vow,
And he strode right on down the archway dim,
Nor looked behind in the shadows grim ;
But his breath came in with a hissing sound,
And he could not, durst not, turn him round.
Brighter and brighter the wizard blue,
Broader and broader the pale light grew.

As a miner lost in the mazy mine
Follows the gnome-light's mocking shine,
He strode to the cell and the cross and shrine.

De Bracy stopped till the echoes died,
And looked in silence from side to side.
He saw the walls of stone so bare
Strangely white in that bluish glare ;
He saw the recess curtained and dim,
The cushion dimpled by kneeling limb,
The censer that swung with a lazy motion
Like the heaving waves of a summer ocean ;
But there was no hand on the censer chain,
And the still blue light of the tapers twain

Gave to the face of the Christ between
A look of mockery more than pain :

Forth from the cross he seemed to lean,
And gloat on the lily's burning stain.
The lily stood in a chalice of gold,
Quaintly wrought with devices old.
De Bracy knew that blossom well,—
It was the flower of Christabel.

Under the chalice lay a scroll,
Half a sheet, and half a roll.
De Bracy spread it flat and thin,
And he bowed his head, and he read therein :
“ For an hour and an hour and an hour
Shall the spell have power,—

The spell of the withered breast,
And the spell of the heart that is dead,
And the serpent soul shall shed
Its pain and its shame and its dread,
And slumber and be at rest,

Holy and pure and free,
And the sin on the sinless shall be
For an hour and an hour and an hour."

Reading, ever he looked askance,
With furtive, questioning, troubled glance ;
For he saw the shadows to and fro
On the wall of the chamber come and go.
But there was not the sound of the lightest tread,
And nought appeared when he raised his head.
He snatched from the chalice the blasted flower,
And its petals fell in a pearly shower.
Close to the calyx, beside the stem,
Clung a vivid and burning gem.
De Bracy knew that ruddy shine,
And he called on the Lady Geraldine.
The echoes answered him o'er and o'er—
Was it Echo only, or something more ?
Surely there came with the sting of fear
A child's fine treble merry and clear ;
Laughing notes like a silver bell
Rung in the very heart of hell :
Words nor meaning he could not guess,
But a tiger's yell had stirred him less.
Then he felt the deadly silence flow
In on his soul like a flood of woe ;
And the shadows kept moving to and fro.
But he battled bravely with heart and eye,
And he shrieked aloud with a mighty cry,
"In the name of the Christ and the cross and the
shrine,
I summon thee, Lady Geraldine."

Then he heard a rustling behind, but near,
And a rich voice murmured, "Lo, I am here."

The tapers blazed with a livid glare ;
And he turned, and a lady was standing there—
The lady it seemed of the old oak-tree—
In the awesome beauty of sorcery.
The lady was veiled from foot to crown
In a priestly strangely-pictured gown,
Save where a fold with wanton art
Opened just above her heart,
And a bosom showed like the morning snow
In the first soft flush of its early glow ;
For the stir of the blood through the tender skin
Shone with the warmth of a living sin.

Bard of the spirit pure and high,
Of the holy quest and the knightly eye,
Fallen, how fallen ! Has ill such power
That a handbreadth space of rounded snow,
Though lit by that inner evil glow,
Can sting the soul as it stung the flower ?

De Bracy strove with the blinding spell,
And he called on the mother of Christabel.
But the lady stepped to his tingling side :
“ Choose ye between us,” she said, and sighed ;
“ Choose ye between us, the maid and me.”
And he dropped at her feet on his bended knee.
Then he heard again, like a silver bell,
That laugh, like a child in the heart of hell.
And ere it ended, there spread, I wist,
Swift through his veins a stinging mist,
For his brow felt the pressure of lips that kissed,
And he sprang to his feet with a hungry glare,
And tore the gown from her shoulders bare,

From limb and visage and streaming hair,
And he viewed—what viewed he standing there?
He smote his hand on his stricken eye,
And reeled to the floor with a rending cry.
What had he seen? I may not say;
For he never told till his dying day.

I doubt De Bracy no more had known
The sunny court or the woodland lone,
But that his arm, as it struck the floor,
Dashed, unwitting, the harp-strings o'er,
And struck a note of the solemn tune
Which his lady played by the waning moon—
His lady feared by the lords of hell,
The lovely mother of Christabel.
It was but a note, but the harp played on,
And he knew whose fingers the strings had won,
What viewless vigil beside him kept,
And e'en in his dizzy trance he wept;
For he felt that the power of the hidden ill
By the unseen good shall be baffled still.

Hour by hour the harp-strings played,
Then ceased; and he rose in the haunted glade.
The moon was shining pale and lone
On the crown and the cross of the great gray stone;
And the seven red flowers blooming rare
Had closed their cups on the cool night air;
And down the archways long and dim
The wail of the owlet came to him.
Then from the castle far away
He heard the mastiff's sullen bay.
Four for the quarter, and twelve for the hour;
It was the season when fiends have power.

He rose, and tottered, and feebly fled,
For his heart was heavy as molten lead,
And a fever burned in his throbbing head.
Shall he brave the wrath of Sir Leoline
And the beauteous lady Geraldine?
Shall he tell of the cell and the cross and shrine,
Of the flower and the scroll and the wizard vest,
And the burning spell of the rosy breast?
Shall he say, "'Twas only thy child to free
That I left the errand thou gavest me?"
He could not tell, but he stumbled on
Through the shadowy woods and the moonlight wan,
Till hard by the open halted he,
And full in front lay the old oak-tree.
Two lovely ladies there he spied,
Kneeling sisterly side by side.
One was a maiden soft and fair,
And one had jewels on neck and hair;
And he thought on the ruddy gem that clung
To the heart of the lily and burned and stung.
Then he knew that the maiden Christabel
Had sought to flee from the hated spell,
And pass in prayer by the holy tree
The hour of sin and sorcery;
And the smiling Lady Geraldine
Had followed her out in the clear moonshine,
To kneel beside her sisterwise,
And peer in the depths of her pleading eyes,
And lead her back to her virgin room
For an hour of sorrow and sin and doom.
They rose as he looked, and the maiden kept
Her eyes on the ground, and in silence wept.

But the jewelled lady turned her gaze
Full on his face like a sudden blaze.
The hot kiss stung his brow again,
And the rosy bosom was like a pain.
Her arm lay still, and her voice was dumb,
But eye to eye said plainly, "Come."
Then back o'er the barren moonlit land
He saw them pacing hand in hand.

Doubtful a moment De Bracy stood ;
But the spell was fierce in his turbid blood ;
And he slowly crept to the postern gate,
As one who traileth a weary weight :
Closed it, and entered, and stilled the growl
Of the mastiff bitch by his chiding scowl ;
Stole like a ghost through the half-lit hall,
Watching and harking for sign or call ;
Then slowly on to the maiden's door :
It was open,—the moon was on the floor.

But will he cross that threshold now
With the evil light in heart and brow ?
Maiden chamber to vilest thing
Should be sacred and pure as a mountain spring,
Blessed by saintly voice and hand,
By the breath of the holy angels fanned.
But most to him whom the mother gave
(And swore to watch from her troubled grave)
Charge to guard by harp and spell
The lily maid whom she loved so well.

De Bracy stopped in the hallway bare,
And Christabel saw him standing there.

Dire must be a maiden's need
When she leaps with joy, like a soul that's freed,
At the sight of a man in the dead of night,
 Though a lovely lady is standing by.
But she sprang from her couch in her robe of white,
And she fell on her knees in the wan moonlight,
 With hands upclasping, and lifted eye,
And hair down-streaming, and face as pale
As a phantom navy's flying sail ;
 And she shrieked aloud with a sudden cry,
"Save me, De Bracy, save, O save !"
And again, like a scream from a bursting grave,
"For the love of my mother, save, O save !"

That cry of terror rent the chain
Which had bound De Bracy's heart and brain ;
And he swore to save the maiden dear ;
And he heard a whisper fine and clear,
Though it stirred not nerve and it touched not ear,—
"In and aid her, and have no fear."
And as he stepped, he could feel the glide
Of a viewless something by his side.
But Geraldine in disarray,
With sullen paleness, barred the way,
And at every sweep of her rounded arm
 He caught a glimpse of that bosom old,
 The nightmare shield of a heart as cold ;
And she chanted aloud her warning charm :

 " In spite of ye both, I have power
 For an hour and an hour and an hour,
 And forever, if it shall be
 That a sin of her own
 Joins the sin unknown,

The sin that she draws from me.
For this I have given the heart
That was warm as a heart should be,
And the bosom fair to see,
And have taken by magic art
The bosom old
And the heart that is cold,
Where the red blood will not start.
Already one hour is sped,
Another will soon be fled ;
But ere the third goes by
She is lost eternally.
For the sin on the sinless shall be,
And peace shall abide with me,
Not alone for an hour and an hour."

"Not so!" he answered, "foul witch, I swear."
Her eyes met his with a mocking stare,
And she pointed back to the mirror rare.
He saw therein his harp and frown,
And behind—why moans he?—the pictured gown,
The bosom warm with a deadly sin,
And the bending, ogling leer and grin,
Over his shoulder, beside his ear.
Now, bard, saints save thee, if saint be near.
Twice that vision thy fate doth give :
Man may not see it thrice and live.
He crouched aside with stiffening hair,
And he called on Christ in a silent prayer,
And he dashed like mad to the hallway bare.

But Christabel could nothing see,
Save the lady of the old oak-tree,

The chanting voice and the evil spell,
The face of heaven and the soul of hell ;
Yet she swooned like death in the pale moonshine
And the arms of the Lady Geraldine.

CONCLUSION OF THIRD PART.

What could be more fine and rare
Than the bard with waving hair
In the dancing sunlight flowing,
Brighter than the sunlight glowing,
While the inspiration's flush
Gave his cheek a happy blush,
And his eager opening eye,
Fixed upon the fainter sky,
Let its holy message through
Windows of a holier blue,
And the stir of noble thought
From his darting fingers caught
(As it gave the throbbing strings)
Life that soars and prays and sings !
Voice and finger, heart and brain,
Soul and spirit, join the strain,—
Echoes of the heavenly host,
Breathings of the Holy Ghost !
Marvel not that the stone was swayed
Which hid the cell by the haunted glade,
Though seven dim archways centre there,
And seven red flowers are blooming rare,
And the stone is guarded by cross and crown
Wrought in the mosses gray and brown.
For the ill in good that is worse than ill
May be baffled by subtler magic still.

But now the bard is crouching low,
Whelmed, o'erwhelmed by fear and woe,
Straining ear for faintest cry,
Daring not to venture nigh,
Guarding in the empty hall,
Lest the worst of ills befall.
And oft his fingers sought the string
And strove the subtle tones to bring,
That spoke the power of his lady's lore
When she sang in the holy days of yore.
Sometimes there answered not a sound ;
Sometimes a discord wailed around ;
And anon the notes in a dulcet flood
Stirred the riotous hectic blood,
Till sin seemed pleasant and fair to see,
And virtue folly, or not to be.
Ah, many an eve in the mighty hall
Shall the direful tale be told to all
Of the night when the boding spirit wailed
Through tower and gallery dimly veiled.
But De Bracy steadily strove and prayed
For the saints' of God and his Lady's aid :
Till at last the notes came soft and clear,
And they roused his spirit and laid his fear ;
For he knew the wizard hour had fled—
The second hour of the conflict dread,—
And the maiden was free of deadly sin,
And the serpent-soul had failed to win
Surcease of shame and pain and sorrow.
But a direr peril may wait the morrow.

THE PLAGUE-FLOWER.

'Twas in a fever-dream I saw and knew
Its mottled tiger-bloom of jaundiced gold,
Its fleshy leaves that dropped with clammy dew,
Its swarthy blotches hideous to behold.
In the black, noisome marsh that horror grew,
And slimy, snake-like weeds coiled round it, fold on
fold.

The heavy, starless, cypress roof o'erhead
Left all below to fitful glare and gloom,
Where danced the wayward witch-fires of the dead
Like fiends carousing in a pillared tomb.
The sagging vines and knotted knees upspread
Took forms like those which haunt some murder-
blasted room.

A dense and deathly exhalation rose,
Luminous with evil light, from pool and fen,
Feeding the demon-flower, whose throbbing throes
Greedily quaffed and quaffed that breath again.
And in that mist I viewed unnumbered woes:—
Wide desolate towns, waste fields, and crowds of
maddened men;

The infant clinging to the stricken breast,
Drawing death's potion from the fount of life;
The hidden corpse; the sufferer's last behest
Driving far from him mother, child, and wife;
The piteous prayers that vainly seek to wrest
One priceless victim more from out the loathsome
strife.

I saw the face blaspheming turned to heaven ;
The thin hand clutching in the empty air,
Grappling a viewless palm ; the wanderer driven,
Like olden lepers, to his wretched lair ;
All genial human ties asunder riven ;
The thieving hand ; the knife ; the torches' hovering
glare.

And round the rootlets of that dreadful flower
The soil is full of shapes, a grisly throng.
Some bear the bloody dagger-marks of power,
And some the miry stains of meaner wrong.
Some pale, some dusky ; there they writhe and cower,
And feed the poisonous roots that cling and quaff
and long.

Yet, as I gazed, there came a sudden blast,
Riving the night of foliage ; and the stars
Looked down upon me ; and below them passed
A pitying, radiant face, that told of wars
Surmounted, and old hatred backward cast.
The flowing robe of Peace had hidden all her scars.

And from the crown that sparkled on her brow
With jewels radiant as the Frost-King's throne,
She shook a pearl and ruby ; and below
They fell on the great bale-flower, shivering lone.
The hairy stalk began to quake and bow,—
And when I looked again, the spectral scene had
flown.

In a rich glade two flower-stems interwound
Above the firm and healthful summer sod ;

The airs of heaven blew o'er them ; and around
 Bloomed the sky-pointing hopeful golden-rod ;
And one was white, one sunny red, I found,
 And both were beautiful in the sight of man and
 God.

1878.

A VISION OF TO-MORROW.

THE mist that was white as a shroud
 Rolled away, and the Voice said, " Write."
Far through the rift in the cloud,
Like a bird when the storm is loud,
 Darted my sight.

I saw the things that have been,—
 A vision which all may see,—
And the vision denied to men,
 The things that are yet to be ;
And I shuddered, and veiled my sight ;
 Yet the Voice said, " Write."

I saw the crownéd Twain,
Hand in hand, heart to heart, vein to vein,
And the taller was fair as the sun,
And the strength of them both was as one,
And the sin of them both as of one.

For under the floor of their car,
With its draping of stripe and of star,
 Came the bearers dusky as night,
 Came the bearers haggard and white,
With the burden too great to bear.

For the lissome arm so brown
With the lash and the chain dropped down
 Heavy as lead ;
And the gold that the fair Queen grasps
 Had the weight of the sod on the dead ;
And the bearers they breathed in gasps
 And they reeled in their tread.

Then a flash hid them all from my sight,
And it paled ; and the Voice said, " Write."

I saw the crownéd Twain,
 But the darker was crownless now,
 And the light had left her brow,
And gone was her vassal train.
And the bearers haggard and white
Brightened with wild delight,
 For the Queen that was fair as the sun,
 In her joy at the victory won,
Lavished her gifts in their sight.

And they saw not, unshown,
 That the burden they bore
 Was as great as before
And they bore it alone.

Then a cloud hid the scene from my sight,
And it passed, and the Voice said, " Write."

And the bearers haggard and pale
Writhed with the burden they bore,
And sank in the mire and the sands,
Lifting imploring hands
 With shriek and desolate wail,
And their cry was loud in the lands.

And some cried, "More! More! More!
Open, O Queen, thy store!"
(They had drunken her gifts like wine
In the days that had seemed divine),
And some were beginning to curse,
And to cry, "Was the dark Queen worse?
We have borne this weight from of yore,
And now we will bear no more."

And their Queen had a hunted face,
Haggard and full of fear,
As the stag when the sounds of chase
Proclaim that the hounds are near;
And she reached for the lash in vain
That had fallen from the dark Queen's hands,
And she showered her gifts like rain,
For the cry was loud in the lands.
Yet the cry rose more and more,
"Open, O Queen, thy store!"

Then a curtain dropped on my sight,
And it rose; and the Voice said, "Write."

And the bearers haggard and white
Were frantic with wild delight,
For they said, "We shall slay her now
For the rings that are on her hand
And the crown that is on her brow."

And the fair Queen strove to stand,
And she cast appealing eyes.
Then I saw the dark Queen rise,
Scornful and tall and grand,
Shadowing all the land,

And her lissome arm had the swing
Of the eagle's rushing wing
As he swoops with the prey in his grasp,
And the sting of the deadly asp
Was the sting of the lash she swayed.

 And the bearers moaned,
 And the bearers groaned,
But they kneeled them down and obeyed.

So again beneath the car,
With its draping of stripe and star,
 Came the bearers dusky as night,
 Came the bearers haggard and white,
With the burden too great to bear.

For the strength of the Queens was as one,
And the shame of them both as of one.

And I asked, "Shall this always be?"
And the Voice said, "Wait and see."

1878.

THE CHEYENNE MASSACRE.

THE devil came up from hell
 In a uniform of blue ;
For he said, "They are doing well
 The work that I love to do.
The Bashi Bazouk and Thug
 Are worthy my friends to be ;
But I long to clasp the hand
 Of a captain of cavalry !"

Out from the land of sorrow
The Indian exiles fled,
And their trail through the wide frontier
Was strewn with their graveless dead :
Some where the threescore warriors
Turned at desperate bay ;
Some where the feeble stragglers
Had fallen the borderer's prey.
Babes to their freezing mothers
Clung in the bitter wind ;
But still they staggered onward,
For the war-wolves coursed behind.
Hail to the blasts of winter !
Cheers for the ice and snow !
The trooper's worthy allies
Are Famine and Want and Woe.

The curtain falls : and rises
On prisoners gaunt and wild,
On furious outraged manhood,
On starving mother and child.
For the voice of their heartless captor
Answers their urgent plea,
" I feed but the mild and docile,
And such ye have ceased to be."

They heard in sullen silence,
Till the fatal midnight came,
And the voice of taunted nature
Burst forth like leaping flame.
Through bar and sash and paling
They dashed with a frantic rush,
And the helpless guards reeled backward
Like twigs in a torrent's gush.

The hapless fathers, bearing
Their children, led the way,
Or turned to drive the demons
Back from their feeble prey.
For soldiers and men and Christians,—
God, that such things should be !—
Pouring volley on volley,
Slaughtered remorselessly.
The voice of our highest culture
Swelled the devilish cry ;
And the lessons of lordly Hudson
Aided the babes to die.
And as oft as the writhing wounded
Reared 'his wretched head,
Some ball-room gallant was ready
With his ounce of pistol-lead.

O men of honor and glory,
Men of trappings and pride,
You have changed for the worse since the darkness
Brooded while Jesus died !
In the light of his holy teaching,
Bearing His holier name,
You have done what the soldiers of Pilate
Would have shrunk from in burning shame.

But not in vain has arisen
The murdered Indian's cry.
Alike o'er hireling and nation
A judgment is hovering nigh.
Not long the master demon
Of that frightful border den
Shall shame the blessed sunshine
And the cheeks of honest men.

May Want and black Dishonor
Stand by his dying bed,
And the curse of the starved and murdered
Weigh on his soul like lead !

1878.

ON CAPITOL HILL.

THE angel eyes of heaven
Looked down from the darkness above ;
The fiery eyes of the city
Burned up through the blackness below ;
And never a trace of the pearly moon
Nor a hint of the sunrise glow !

Arch and portal and pillar
Towered on the height midway,
Shapely and tall and stately,
And wan with a doubtful gleam :
And the dome that rose above them all
Was the temple-dome of a dream.

High aloof, the goddess,
Throned in the solemn light,
Half seen, half guessed, held converse
With the powers of the waste of air ;
And it seemed that the soul of a mighty land
Was halting and doubting there.

1879.

A LEGEND OF THE ALLEGHANIES.

ACROSS Cacapon's barren back,
Beneath the scudding cloudland rack,
 Silent, beside the mountaineer,
I rode along the rugged track.

Below us lay the valley bright,
Far reaching to the left and right,
 Of varying width : a buttressed wall
Gave mete and bound to forward sight.

The isles of grass seemed emeralds set
In some forgotten coronet ;
 And through the midst, a shining band,
Wound in and out a rivulet.

Two homes appeared : one, white and far,
Shone in the sunbeams like a star ;
 The other bore in blackened walls
The dreadful signature of War.

And who could fail to understand
That we were traversing the land
 Of tales that deal with stirring themes
And vague traditions weird and grand ?

So, as I rode, my thoughts took range
With the wild sweep of fancies strange
 In his quaint, marvellous recital,
Which I repeat with little change.

Long, long ago,—I know not when,—
There sought these mountains foreign men.

But whence they came I cannot say,
Nor whether they returned again.

Theirs was a speech no mortal knew.
They dealt with none,—their wants were few,—
And little of their work was wrought
Between the sunrise and the dew.

But often the belated wight
Saw in the dark their fires alight,
And, creeping near, could plainly view
The high-piled ingots clean and bright.

And, wondrous in their garb and hair,
With flowing beards and brown arms bare,
He watched the frantic artisans
Who toiled and sang in chorus there.

And at that chorus swelling wide
Shivered the bridegroom and the bride,
And infants miles away would cling
More tightly to the mother's side.

One day they vanished from the glen
Which long had been their wizard den,
And every vestige of their stay
Had passed at once from mortal ken.

The ravaged bosom of the hills
Was clad with grass and bright with rills.

The blackened woods were green again,
And musical with wild-bird trills.

Then, tempted by that wondrous store
Of gleaming blocks and shapeless ore,
Strong men assailed the mighty hills
To wrest by force the prize of lore.

But bootless were their toil and pains :
The fruitful mountain's ruddy veins
And silver ducts those miners weird
Had drained as never mortal drains.

But after many a day and year
A hunter paused that spot anear,
And, gazing through the evergreens,
He stood as one in sudden fear.

For there a tablet he beheld
Quaint wrought with characters of eld,
Unholy marks, black, straggling signs.
He strove and strove,—but nothing spelled.

He stooped, and seized the door-like stone,
And wrenched to burst the force unknown
Which held it clinging to the breast
Of that strange mountain grim and lone.

But fruitless was his frantic strain,
Though the hot sweat-drops fell like rain,
Until, like one in mortal fear,
He turned him round and fled amain.

And never afterward could he
Again that wondrous tablet see,
Though far around a zealous band
Searched mountain-side and greenery.

Years came and went. A herdsman sought
His cattle near the self-same spot,
And came upon the carven stone,
And seized and strove—and conquered not.

But one who would not conquered be,
Himself a son of sorcery,
Had sworn to try the Obi skill
Of sunbrown lands beyond the sea.

He found the tablet when the glare
Of lightning filled the outer air,
And through the rifted pines the wind
Went by with voices of despair.

What magic broke the stubborn spell
I know not,—only this befell :
The stone from off the nether chasm
Rose like a curb-lid from a well.

He clutched it by the tilting side,
And peered with eyeballs staring wide ;
But never mortal man could learn
What that brief scrutiny descried.

The mountain shook with sudden throes ;
From glen and cavern groans arose,
And, headlong hurled through brake and brier,
He felt the strokes of viewless foes.

And so our mountains yield to-day
Nor gold nor silver, though they say
That still the treasure hidden lies,
And one dark ghost could point the way.

1879.

THE END.



Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2009

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